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THE WORKS OF
JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

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VOLUME VI





Mr Lowell's Study at Elmwood

LITERARY AND POLITICAL ADDRESSES

BY

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL



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CONTENTS

DEMOCRACY	7
GARFIELD	38
STANLEY	47
FIELDING	51
COLERIDGE	68
BOOKS AND LIBRARIES	78
WORDSWORTH	99
DON QUIXOTE	115
HARVARD ANNIVERSARY	137
TARIFF REFORM.	181
PLACE OF THE INDEPENDENT IN POLITICS	190
"OUR LITERATURE".	222
INDEX	229

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL IN HIS STUDY AT ELMWOOD ¹	<i>Frontispiece</i>
JAMES A. GARFIELD	40
SAMUEL T. COLERIDGE	68
CERVANTES	116
GEORGE WASHINGTON.	224

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LITERARY AND POLITICAL ADDRESSES

DEMOCRACY

INAUGURAL ADDRESS ON ASSUMING THE PRESIDENCY
OF THE BIRMINGHAM AND MIDLAND INSTITUTE,
BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND, 6 OCTOBER, 1884.

HE must be a born leader or misleader of men, or must have been sent into the world unfurnished with that modulating and restraining balance-wheel which we call a sense of humor, who, in old age, has as strong a confidence in his opinions and in the necessity of bringing the universe into conformity with them as he had in youth. In a world the very condition of whose being is that it should be in perpetual flux, where all seems mirage, and the one abiding thing is the effort to distinguish realities from appearances, the elderly man must be indeed of a singularly tough and valid fibre who is certain that he has any clarified residuum of experience, any assured verdict of reflection, that deserves to be called an opinion, or who, even if he had, feels that he is justified in holding mankind by the button while he is expounding it. And in a world of daily — nay, almost hourly —

journalism, where every clever man, every man who thinks himself clever, or whom anybody else thinks clever, is called upon to deliver his judgment point-blank and at the word of command on every conceivable subject of human thought, or, on what sometimes seems to him very much the same thing, on every inconceivable display of human want of thought, there is such a spendthrift waste of all those commonplaces which furnish the permitted staple of public discourse that there is little chance of beguiling a new tune out of the one-stringed instrument on which we have been thrumming so long. In this desperate necessity one is often tempted to think that, if all the words of the dictionary were tumbled down in a heap and then all those fortuitous juxtapositions and combinations that made tolerable sense were picked out and pieced together, we might find among them some poignant suggestions towards novelty of thought or expression. But, alas! it is only the great poets who seem to have this unsolicited profusion of unexpected and incalculable phrase, this infinite variety of topic. For everybody else everything has been said before, and said over again after. He who has read his Aristotle will be apt to think that observation has on most points of general applicability said its last word, and he who has mounted the tower of Plato to look abroad from it will never hope to climb another with so lofty a vantage of speculation. Where it is so simple if not so easy a thing to hold one's peace, why add to the general confusion of tongues?

There is something disheartening, too, in being expected to fill up not less than a certain measure of time, as if the mind were an hour-glass, that need only be shaken and set on one end or the other, as the case may be, to run its allotted sixty minutes with decorous exactitude. I recollect being once told by the late eminent naturalist, Agassiz, that when he was to deliver his first lecture as professor (at Zürich, I believe) he had grave doubts of his ability to occupy the prescribed three quarters of an hour. He was speaking without notes, and glancing anxiously from time to time at the watch that lay before him on the desk. "When I had spoken a half hour," he said, "I had told them everything I knew in the world, everything! Then I began to repeat myself," he added, roguishly, "and I have done nothing else ever since." Beneath the humorous exaggeration of the story I seemed to see the face of a very serious and improving moral. And yet if one were to say only what he had to say and then stopped, his audience would feel defrauded of their honest measure. Let us take courage by the example of the French, whose exportation of Bordeaux wines increases as the area of their land in vineyards is diminished.

To me, somewhat hopelessly revolving these things, the undelayable year has rolled round, and I find myself called upon to say something in this place, where so many wiser men have spoken before me. Precluded, in my quality of national guest, by motives of taste and discretion, from dealing with any question of immediate and domestic con-

cern, it seemed to me wisest, or at any rate most prudent, to choose a topic of comparatively abstract interest, and to ask your indulgence for a few somewhat generalized remarks on a matter concerning which I had some experimental knowledge, derived from the use of such eyes and ears as Nature had been pleased to endow me withal, and such report as I had been able to win from them. The subject which most readily suggested itself was the spirit and the working of those conceptions of life and polity which are lumped together, whether for reproach or commendation, under the name of Democracy. By temperament and education of a conservative turn, I saw the last years of that quaint Arcadia which French travellers saw with delighted amazement a century ago, and have watched the change (to me a sad one) from an agricultural to a proletary population. The testimony of Balaam should carry some conviction. I have grown to manhood and am now growing old with the growth of this system of government in my native land, have watched its advances, or what some would call its encroachments, gradual and irresistible as those of a glacier, have been an ear-witness to the forebodings of wise and good and timid men, and have lived to see those forebodings belied by the course of events, which is apt to show itself humorously careless of the reputation of prophets. I recollect hearing a sagacious old gentleman say in 1840 that the doing away with the property qualification for suffrage twenty years before had been the ruin of the State of Massa-

chusetts; that it had put public credit and private estate alike at the mercy of demagogues. I lived to see that Commonwealth twenty odd years later paying the interest on her bonds in gold, though it cost her sometimes nearly three for one to keep her faith, and that while suffering an unparalleled drain of men and treasure in helping to sustain the unity and self-respect of the nation.

If universal suffrage has worked ill in our larger cities, as it certainly has, this has been mainly because the hands that wielded it were untrained to its use. There the election of a majority of the trustees of the public money is controlled by the most ignorant and vicious of a population which has come to us from abroad, wholly unpractised in self-government and incapable of assimilation by American habits and methods. But the finances of our towns, where the native tradition is still dominant and whose affairs are discussed and settled in a public assembly of the people, have been in general honestly and prudently administered. Even in manufacturing towns, where a majority of the voters live by their daily wages, it is not so often the recklessness as the moderation of public expenditure that surprises an old-fashioned observer. "The beggar is in the saddle at last," cries Proverbial Wisdom. "Why, in the name of all former experience, does n't he ride to the Devil?" Because in the very act of mounting he ceased to be a beggar and became part owner of the piece of property he bestrides. The last thing we need be anxious about is property. It always has friends

or the means of making them. If riches have wings to fly away from their owner, they have wings also to escape danger.

I hear America sometimes playfully accused of sending you all your storms, and am in the habit of parrying the charge by alleging that we are enabled to do this because, in virtue of our protective system, we can afford to make better bad weather than anybody else. And what wiser use could we make of it than to export it in return for the paupers which some European countries are good enough to send over to us who have not attained to the same skill in the manufacture of them? But bad weather is not the worst thing that is laid at our door. A French gentleman, not long ago, forgetting Burke's monition of how unwise it is to draw an indictment against a whole people, has charged us with the responsibility of whatever he finds disagreeable in the morals or manners of his countrymen. If M. Zola or some other competent witness would only go into the box and tell us what those morals and manners were before our example corrupted them! But I confess that I find little to interest and less to edify me in these international bandyings of "You're another."

I shall address myself to a single point only in the long list of offences of which we are more or less gravely accused, because that really includes all the rest. It is that we are infecting the Old World with what seems to be thought the entirely new disease of Democracy. It is generally people who are in what are called 'easy circumstances who

can afford the leisure to treat themselves to a handsome complaint, and these experience an immediate alleviation when once they have found a sonorous Greek name to abuse it by. There is something consolatory also, something flattering to their sense of personal dignity, and to that conceit of singularity which is the natural recoil from our uneasy consciousness of being commonplace, in thinking ourselves victims of a malady by which no one had ever suffered before. Accordingly they find it simpler to class under one comprehensive heading whatever they find offensive to their nerves, their tastes, their interests, or what they suppose to be their opinions, and christen it Democracy, much as physicians label every obscure disease gout, or as cross-grained fellows lay their ill-temper to the weather. But is it really a new ailment, and, if it be, is America answerable for it? Even if she were, would it account for the phylloxera, and hoof-and-mouth disease, and bad harvests, and bad English, and the German bands, and the Boers, and all the other discomforts with which these later days have vexed the souls of them that go in chariots? Yet I have seen the evil example of Democracy in America cited as the source and origin of things quite as heterogeneous and quite as little connected with it by any sequence of cause and effect. Surely this ferment is nothing new. It has been at work for centuries, and we are more conscious of it only because in this age of publicity, where the newspapers offer a rostrum to whoever has a grievance, or fancies that he has, the bubbles

and scum thrown up by it are more noticeable on the surface than in those dumb ages when there was a cover of silence and suppression on the cauldron. Bernardo Navagero, speaking of the Provinces of Lower Austria in 1546, tells us that "in them there are five sorts of persons, Clergy, Barons, Nobles, Burghers, and Peasants. Of these last no account is made, *because they have no voice in the Diet.*"¹

Nor was it among the people that subversive or mistaken doctrines had their rise. A Father of the Church said that property was theft many centuries before Proudhon was born. Bourdaloue reaffirmed it. Montesquieu was the inventor of national workshops, and of the theory that the State owed every man a living. Nay, was not the Church herself the first organized Democracy? A few centuries ago the chief end of man was to keep his soul alive, and then the little kernel of leaven that sets the gases at work was religious, and produced the Reformation. Even in that, far-sighted persons like the Emperor Charles V. saw the germ of political and social revolution. Now that the chief end of man seems to have become the keeping of the body alive, and as comfortably alive as

¹ Below the Peasants, it should be remembered, was still another even more helpless class, the servile farm-laborers. The same witness informs us that of the extraordinary imposts the Peasants paid nearly twice as much in proportion to their estimated property as the Barons, Nobles, and Burghers together. Moreover, the upper classes were assessed at their own valuation, while they arbitrarily fixed that of the Peasants, who had no voice. (*Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti*, Serie I., tomo i, pp. 378, 379, 389.)

possible, the heaven also has become wholly political and social. But there had also been social upheavals before the Reformation and contemporaneously with it, especially among men of Teutonic race. The Reformation gave outlet and direction to an unrest already existing. Formerly the immense majority of men — our brothers — knew only their sufferings, their wants, and their desires. They are beginning now to know their opportunity and their power. All persons who see deeper than their plates are rather inclined to thank God for it than to bewail it, for the sores of Lazarus have a poison in them against which Dives has no antidote.

There can be no doubt that the spectacle of a great and prosperous Democracy on the other side of the Atlantic must react powerfully on the aspirations and political theories of men in the Old World who do not find things to their mind ; but, whether for good or evil, it should not be overlooked that the acorn from which it sprang was ripened on the British oak. Every successive swarm that has gone out from this *officina gentium* has, when left to its own instincts — may I not call them hereditary instincts ? — assumed a more or less thoroughly democratic form. This would seem to show, what I believe to be the fact, that the British Constitution, under whatever disguises of prudence or decorum, is essentially democratic. England, indeed, may be called a monarchy with democratic tendencies, the United States a democracy with conservative instincts. People are con-

tinually saying that America is in the air, and I am glad to think it is, since this means only that a clearer conception of human claims and human duties is beginning to be prevalent. The discontent with the existing order of things, however, pervaded the atmosphere wherever the conditions were favorable, long before Columbus, seeking the back door of Asia, found himself knocking at the front door of America. I say wherever the conditions were favorable, for it is certain that the germs of disease do not stick or find a prosperous field for their development and noxious activity unless where the simplest sanitary precautions have been neglected. "For this effect defective comes by cause," as Polonius said long ago. It is only by instigation of the wrongs of men that what are called the Rights of Man become turbulent and dangerous. It is then only that they syllogize unwelcome truths. It is not the insurrections of ignorance that are dangerous, but the revolts of intelligence : —

"The wicked and the weak rebel in vain,
Slaves by their own compulsion."

Had the governing classes in France during the last century paid as much heed to their proper business as to their pleasures or manners, the guillotine need never have severed that spinal marrow of orderly and secular tradition through which in a normally constituted state the brain sympathizes with the extremities and sends will and impulsion thither. It is only when the reasonable and practicable are denied that men demand the unreasonable and impracticable ; only when the possible is

made difficult that they fancy the impossible to be easy. Fairy tales are made out of the dreams of the poor. No; the sentiment which lies at the root of democracy is nothing new. I am speaking always of a sentiment, a spirit, and not of a form of government; for this was but the outgrowth of the other and not its cause. This sentiment is merely an expression of the natural wish of people to have a hand, if need be a controlling hand, in the management of their own affairs. What is new is that they are more and more gaining that control, and learning more and more how to be worthy of it. What we used to call the tendency or drift — what we are being taught to call more wisely the evolution of things — has for some time been setting steadily in this direction. There is no good in arguing with the inevitable. The only argument available with an east wind is to put on your overcoat. And in this case, also, the prudent will prepare themselves to encounter what they cannot prevent. Some people advise us to put on the brakes, as if the movement of which we are conscious were that of a railway train running down an incline. But a metaphor is no argument, though it be sometimes the gunpowder to drive one home and imbed it in the memory. Our disquiet comes of what nurses and other experienced persons call growing-pains, and need not seriously alarm us. They are what every generation before us — certainly every generation since the invention of printing — has gone through with more or less good fortune. To the door of every generation there comes

a knocking, and unless the household, like the Thane of Cawdor and his wife, have been doing some deed without a name, they need not shudder. It turns out at worst to be a poor relation who wishes to come in out of the cold. The porter always grumbles and is slow to open. "Who 's there, in the name of Beelzebub?" he mutters. Not a change for the better in our human house-keeping has ever taken place that wise and good men have not opposed it, — have not prophesied with the alderman that the world would wake up to find its throat cut in consequence of it. The world, on the contrary, wakes up, rubs its eyes, yawns, stretches itself, and goes about its business as if nothing had happened. Suppression of the slave trade, abolition of slavery, trade unions, — at all of these excellent people shook their heads despondingly, and murmured "Ichabod." But the trade unions are now debating instead of conspiring, and we all read their discussions with comfort and hope, sure that they are learning the business of citizenship and the difficulties of practical legislation.

One of the most curious of these frenzies of exclusion was that against the emancipation of the Jews. All share in the government of the world was denied for centuries to perhaps the ablest, certainly the most tenacious, race that had ever lived in it — the race to whom we owed our religion and the purest spiritual stimulus and consolation to be found in all literature — a race in which ability seems as natural and hereditary as the curve of

their noses, and whose blood, furtively mingling with the bluest bloods in Europe, has quickened them with its own indomitable impulsion. We drove them into a corner, but they had their revenge, as the wronged are always sure to have it sooner or later. They made their corner the counter and banking-house of the world, and thence they rule it and us with the ignobler sceptre of finance. Your grandfathers mobbed Priestley only that you might set up his statue and make Birmingham the headquarters of English Unitarianism. We hear it said sometimes that this is an age of transition, as if that made matters clearer; but can any one point us to an age that was not? If he could, he would show us an age of stagnation. The question for us, as it has been for all before us, is to make the transition gradual and easy, to see that our points are right so that the train may not come to grief. For we should remember that nothing is more natural for people whose education has been neglected than to spell evolution with an initial "r." A great man struggling with the storms of fate has been called a sublime spectacle; but surely a great man wrestling with these new forces that have come into the world, mastering them and controlling them to beneficent ends, would be a yet sublimer. Here is not a danger, and if there were it would be only a better school of manhood, a nobler scope for ambition. I have hinted that what people are afraid of in democracy is less the thing itself than what they conceive to be its necessary adjuncts and consequences. It is supposed to re-

duce all mankind to a dead level of mediocrity in character and culture, to vulgarize men's conceptions of life, and therefore their code of morals, manners, and conduct — to endanger the rights of property and possession. But I believe that the real gravamen of the charges lies in the habit it has of making itself generally disagreeable by asking the Powers that Be at the most inconvenient moment whether they are the powers that ought to be. If the powers that be are in a condition to give a satisfactory answer to this inevitable question, they need feel in no way discomfited by it.

Few people take the trouble of trying to find out what democracy really is. Yet this would be a great help, for it is our lawless and uncertain thoughts, it is the indefiniteness of our impressions, that fill darkness, whether mental or physical, with spectres and hobgoblins. Democracy is nothing more than an experiment in government, more likely to succeed in a new soil, but likely to be tried in all soils, which must stand or fall on its own merits as others have done before it. For there is no trick of perpetual motion in politics any more than in mechanics. President Lincoln defined democracy to be "the government of the people by the people for the people." This is a sufficiently compact statement of it as a political arrangement. Theodore Parker said that "Democracy meant not 'I'm as good as you are,' but 'You're as good as I am.'" And this is the ethical conception of it, necessary as a complement of the other; a conception which, could it be made actual and practical,

would easily solve all the riddles that the old sphinx of political and social economy who sits by the roadside has been proposing to mankind from the beginning, and which mankind have shown such a singular talent for answering wrongly. In this sense Christ was the first true democrat that ever breathed, as the old dramatist Dekker said he was the first true gentleman. The characters may be easily doubled, so strong is the likeness between them. A beautiful and profound parable of the Persian poet Jellaladeen tells us that "One knocked at the Beloved's door and a voice asked from within 'Who is there?' not he answered 'It is I.' Then the voice said, 'This house will not hold me and thee;' and the door was not opened. Then went the lover into the desert and fasted and prayed in solitude, and after a year he returned and knocked again at the door; and again the voice asked 'Who is there?' and he said 'It is thyself;' and the door was opened to him." But that is idealism, you will say, and this is an only too practical world. I grant it; but I am one of those who believe that the real will never find an irremovable basis till it rests on the ideal. It used to be thought that a democracy was possible only in a small territory, and this is doubtless true of a democracy strictly defined, for in such all the citizens decide directly upon every question of public concern in a general assembly. An example still survives in the tiny Swiss canton of Appenzell. But this immediate intervention of the people in their own affairs is not of the essence of democracy; it

is not necessary, nor indeed, in most cases, practicable. Democracies to which Mr. Lincoln's definition would fairly enough apply have existed, and now exist, in which, though the supreme authority reside in the people, yet they can act only indirectly on the national policy. This generation has seen a democracy with an imperial figurehead, and in all that have ever existed the body politic has never embraced all the inhabitants included within its territory, the right to share in the direction of affairs has been confined to citizens, and citizenship has been further restricted by various limitations, sometimes of property, sometimes of nativity, and always of age and sex.

The framers of the American Constitution were far from wishing or intending to found a democracy in the strict sense of the word, though, as was inevitable, every expansion of the scheme of government they elaborated has been in a democratical direction. But this has been generally the slow result of growth, and not the sudden innovation of theory; in fact, they had a profound disbelief in theory, and knew better than to commit the folly of breaking with the past. They were not seduced by the French fallacy that a new system of government could be ordered like a new suit of clothes. They would as soon have thought of ordering a new suit of flesh and skin. It is only on the roaring loom of time that the stuff is woven for such a vesture of their thought and experience as they were meditating. They recognized fully the value of tradition and habit as the great allies of perma-

nence and stability. They all had that distaste for innovation which belonged to their race, and many of them a distrust of human nature derived from their creed. The day of sentiment was over, and no dithyrambic affirmations or fine-drawn analyses of the Rights of Man would serve their present turn. This was a practical question, and they addressed themselves to it as men of knowledge and judgment should. Their problem was how to adapt English principles and precedents to the new conditions of American life, and they solved it with singular discretion. They put as many obstacles as they could contrive, not in the way of the people's will, but of their whim. With few exceptions they probably admitted the logic of the then accepted syllogism, — democracy, anarchy, despotism. But this formula was framed upon the experience of small cities shut up to stew within their narrow walls, where the number of citizens made but an inconsiderable fraction of the inhabitants, where every passion was reverberated from house to house and from man to man with gathering rumor till every impulse became gregarious and therefore inconsiderate, and every popular assembly needed but an infusion of eloquent sophistry to turn it into a mob, all the more dangerous because sanctified with the formality of law.¹

Fortunately their case was wholly different.

¹ The effect of the electric telegraph in reproducing this trooping of emotion and perhaps of opinion is yet to be measured. The effect of Darwinism as a disintegrator of humanitarianism is also to be reckoned with.

They were to legislate for a widely scattered population and for States already practised in the discipline of a partial independence. They had an unequalled opportunity and enormous advantages. The material they had to work upon was already democratical by instinct and habitude. It was tempered to their hands by more than a century's schooling in self-government. They had but to give permanent and conservative form to a ductile mass. In giving impulse and direction to their new institutions, especially in supplying them with checks and balances, they had a great help and safeguard in their federal organization. The different, sometimes conflicting, interests and social systems of the several States made existence as a Union and coalescence into a nation conditional on a constant practice of moderation and compromise. The very elements of disintegration were the best guides in political training. Their children learned the lesson of compromise only too well, and it was the application of it to a question of fundamental morals that cost us our civil war. We learned once for all that compromise makes a good umbrella but a poor roof; that it is a temporary expedient, often wise in party politics, almost sure to be unwise in statesmanship.

Has not the trial of democracy in America proved, on the whole, successful? If it had not, would the Old World be vexed with any fears of its proving contagious? This trial would have been less severe could it have been made with a people homogeneous in race, language, and tradi-

tions, whereas the United States have been called on to absorb and assimilate enormous masses of foreign population, heterogeneous in all these respects, and drawn mainly from that class which might fairly say that the world was not their friend, nor the world's law. The previous condition too often justified the traditional Irishman, who, landing in New York and asked what his politics were, inquired if there was a Government there, and on being told that there was, retorted, "Thin I'm agin it!" We have taken from Europe the poorest, the most ignorant, the most turbulent of her people, and have made them over into good citizens, who have added to our wealth, and who are ready to die in defence of a country and of institutions which they know to be worth dying for. The exceptions have been (and they are lamentable exceptions) where these hordes of ignorance and poverty have coagulated in great cities. But the social system is yet to seek which has not to look the same terrible wolf in the eyes. On the other hand, at this very moment Irish peasants are buying up the worn-out farms of Massachusetts, and making them productive again by the same virtues of industry and thrift that once made them profitable to the English ancestors of the men who are deserting them. To have achieved even these prosaic results (if you choose to call them so), and that out of materials the most discordant, — I might say the most recalcitrant, — argues a certain beneficent virtue in the system that could do it, and is not to be accounted for by mere luck. Car-

lyle said scornfully that America meant only roast turkey every day for everybody. He forgot that States, as Bacon said of wars, go on their bellies. As for the security of property, it should be tolerably well secured in a country where every other man hopes to be rich, even though the only property qualification be the ownership of two hands that add to the general wealth. Is it not the best security for anything to interest the largest possible number of persons in its preservation and the smallest in its division? In point of fact, far-seeing men count the increasing power of wealth and its combinations as one of the chief dangers with which the institutions of the United States are threatened in the not distant future. The right of individual property is no doubt the very corner-stone of civilization as hitherto understood, but I am a little impatient of being told that property is entitled to exceptional consideration because it bears all the burdens of the State. It bears those, indeed, which can most easily be borne, but poverty pays with its person the chief expenses of war, pestilence, and famine. Wealth should not forget this, for poverty is beginning to think of it now and then. Let me not be misunderstood. I see as clearly as any man possibly can, and rate as highly, the value of wealth, and of hereditary wealth, as the security of refinement, the feeder of all those arts that ennoble and beautify life, and as making a country worth living in. Many an ancestral hall here in England has been a nursery of that culture which has been of example and benefit

to all. Old gold has a civilizing virtue which new gold must grow old to be capable of secreting.

I should not think of coming before you to defend or to criticise any form of government. All have their virtues, all their defects, and all have illustrated one period or another in the history of the race, with signal services to humanity and culture. There is not one that could stand a cynical cross-examination by an experienced criminal lawyer, except that of a perfectly wise and perfectly good despot, such as the world has never seen, except in that white-haired king of Browning's, who

"Lived long ago
In the morning of the world,
When Earth was nearer Heaven than now."

The English race, if they did not invent government by discussion, have at least carried it nearest to perfection in practice. It seems a very safe and reasonable contrivance for occupying the attention of the country, and is certainly a better way of settling questions than by push of pike. Yet, if one should ask it why it should not rather be called government by gabble, it would have to fumble in its pocket a good while before it found the change for a convincing reply. As matters stand, too, it is beginning to be doubtful whether Parliament and Congress sit at Westminster and Washington or in the editors' rooms of the leading journals, so thoroughly is everything debated before the authorized and responsible debaters get on their legs. And what shall we say of government by a majority of voices? To a person who in the last century

would have called himself an Impartial Observer, a numerical preponderance seems, on the whole, as clumsy a way of arriving at truth as could well be devised, but experience has apparently shown it to be a convenient arrangement for determining what may be expedient or advisable or practicable at any given moment. Truth, after all, wears a different face to everybody, and it would be too tedious to wait till all were agreed. She is said to lie at the bottom of a well, for the very reason, perhaps, that whoever looks down in search of her sees his own image at the bottom, and is persuaded not only that he has seen the goddess, but that she is far better-looking than he had imagined.

The arguments against universal suffrage are equally unanswerable. "What," we exclaim, "shall Tom, Dick, and Harry have as much weight in the scale as I?" Of course, nothing could be more absurd. And yet universal suffrage has not been the instrument of greater unwisdom than contrivances of a more select description. Assemblies could be mentioned composed entirely of Masters of Arts and Doctors in Divinity which have sometimes shown traces of human passion or prejudice in their votes. Have the Serene Highnesses and Enlightened Classes carried on the business of Mankind so well, then, that there is no use in trying a less costly method? The democratic theory is that those Constitutions are likely to prove steadiest which have the broadest base, that the right to vote makes a safety-valve of every voter, and that the best way of teaching a man how to vote is to

give him the chance of practice. For the question is no longer the academic one, "Is it wise to give every man the ballot?" but rather the practical one, "Is it prudent to deprive whole classes of it any longer?" It may be conjectured that it is cheaper in the long run to lift men up than to hold them down, and that the ballot in their hands is less dangerous to society than a sense of wrong in their heads. At any rate this is the dilemma to which the drift of opinion has been for some time sweeping us, and in politics a dilemma is a more unmanageable thing to hold by the horns than a wolf by the ears. It is said that the right of suffrage is not valued when it is indiscriminately bestowed, and there may be some truth in this, for I have observed that what men prize most is a privilege, even if it be that of chief mourner at a funeral. But is there not danger that it will be valued at more than its worth if denied, and that some illegitimate way will be sought to make up for the want of it? Men who have a voice in public affairs are at once affiliated with one or other of the great parties between which society is divided, merge their individual hopes and opinions in its safer, because more generalized, hopes and opinions, are disciplined by its tactics, and acquire, to a certain degree, the orderly qualities of an army. They no longer belong to a class, but to a body corporate. Of one thing, at least, we may be certain, that, under whatever method of helping things to go wrong man's wit can contrive, those who have the divine right to govern will be found to govern in the end,

and that the highest privilege to which the majority of mankind can aspire is that of being governed by those wiser than they. Universal suffrage has in the United States sometimes been made the instrument of inconsiderate changes, under the notion of reform, and this from a misconception of the true meaning of popular government. One of these has been the substitution in many of the States of popular election for official selection in the choice of judges. The same system applied to military officers was the source of much evil during our civil war, and, I believe, had to be abandoned. But it has been also true that on all great questions of national policy a reserve of prudence and discretion has been brought out at the critical moment to turn the scale in favor of a wiser decision. An appeal to the reason of the people has never been known to fail in the long run. It is, perhaps, true that, by effacing the principle of passive obedience, democracy, ill understood, has slackened the spring of that ductility to discipline which is essential to "the unity and married calm of States." But I feel assured that experience and necessity will cure this evil, as they have shown their power to cure others. And under what frame of policy have evils ever been remedied till they became intolerable, and shook men out of their indolent indifference through their fears?

We are told that the inevitable result of democracy is to sap the foundations of personal independence, to weaken the principle of authority, to lessen the respect due to eminence, whether in

station, virtue, or genius. If these things were so, society could not hold together. Perhaps the best forcing-house of robust individuality would be where public opinion is inclined to be most overbearing, as he must be of heroic temper who should walk along Piccadilly at the height of the season in a soft hat. As for authority, it is one of the symptoms of the time that the religious reverence for it is declining everywhere, but this is due partly to the fact that state-craft is no longer looked upon as a mystery, but as a business, and partly to the decay of superstition, by which I mean the habit of respecting what we are told to respect rather than what is respectable in itself. There is more rough and tumble in the American democracy than is altogether agreeable to people of sensitive nerves and refined habits, and the people take their political duties lightly and laughingly, as is, perhaps, neither unnatural nor unbecoming in a young giant. Democracies can no more jump away from their own shadows than the rest of us can. They no doubt sometimes make mistakes and pay honor to men who do not deserve it. But they do this because they believe them worthy of it, and though it be true that the idol is the measure of the worshipper, yet the worship has in it the germ of a nobler religion. But is it democracies alone that fall into these errors? I, who have seen it proposed to erect a statue to Hudson, the railway king, and have heard Louis Napoleon hailed as the saviour of society by men who certainly had no democratic associations or leanings, am not ready to think so.

But democracies have likewise their finer instincts. I have also seen the wisest statesman and most pregnant speaker of our generation, a man of humble birth and ungainly manners, of little culture beyond what his own genius supplied, become more absolute in power than any monarch of modern times through the reverence of his countrymen for his honesty, his wisdom, his sincerity, his faith in God and man, and the nobly humane simplicity of his character. And I remember another whom popular respect enveloped as with a halo, the least vulgar of men, the most austere genial, and the most independent of opinion. Wherever he went he never met a stranger, but everywhere neighbors and friends proud of him as their ornament and decoration. Institutions which could bear and breed such men as Lincoln and Emerson had surely some energy for good. No, amid all the fruitless turmoil and miscarriage of the world, if there be one thing steadfast and of favorable omen, one thing to make optimism distrust its own obscure distrust, it is the rooted instinct in men to admire what is better and more beautiful than themselves. The touchstone of political and social institutions is their ability to supply them with worthy objects of this sentiment, which is the very tap-root of civilization and progress. There would seem to be no readier way of feeding it with the elements of growth and vigor than such an organization of society as will enable men to respect themselves, and so to justify them in respecting others.

Such a result is quite possible under other conditions than those of an avowedly democratical Constitution. For I take it that the real essence of democracy was fairly enough defined by the First Napoleon when he said that the French Revolution meant "*la carrière ouverte aux talents*" — a clear pathway for merit of whatever kind. I should be inclined to paraphrase this by calling democracy that form of society, no matter what its political classification, in which every man had a chance and knew that he had it. If a man can climb, and feels himself encouraged to climb, from a coalpit to the highest position for which he is fitted, he can well afford to be indifferent what name is given to the government under which he lives. The Bailli of Mirabeau, uncle of the more famous tribune of that name, wrote in 1771: "The English are, in my opinion, a hundred times more agitated and more unfortunate than the very Algerines themselves, because they do not know and will not know till the destruction of their over-swollen power, which I believe very near, whether they are monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy, and wish to play the part of all three." England has not been obliging enough to fulfil the Bailli's prophecy, and perhaps it was this very carelessness about the name, and concern about the substance of popular government, this skill in getting the best out of things as they are, in utilizing all the motives which influence men, and in giving one direction to many impulses, that has been a principal factor of her greatness and power. Perhaps it is fortu-

nate to have an unwritten Constitution, for men are prone to be tinkering the work of their own hands, whereas they are more willing to let time and circumstance mend or modify what time and circumstance have made. All free governments, whatever their name, are in reality governments by public opinion, and it is on the quality of this public opinion that their prosperity depends. It is, therefore, their first duty to purify the element from which they draw the breath of life. With the growth of democracy grows also the fear, if not the danger, that this atmosphere may be corrupted with poisonous exhalations from lower and more malarious levels, and the question of sanitation becomes more instant and pressing. Democracy in its best sense is merely the letting in of light and air. Lord Sherbrooke, with his usual epigrammatic terseness, bids you educate your future rulers. But would this alone be a sufficient safeguard? To educate the intelligence is to enlarge the horizon of its desires and wants. And it is well that this should be so. But the enterprise must go deeper and prepare the way for satisfying those desires and wants in so far as they are legitimate. What is really ominous of danger to the existing order of things is not democracy (which, properly understood, is a conservative force), but the Socialism, which may find a fulcrum in it. If we cannot equalize conditions and fortunes any more than we can equalize the brains of men—and a very sagacious person has said that “where two men ride of a horse one must ride

behind" — we can yet, perhaps, do something to correct those methods and influences that lead to enormous inequalities, and to prevent their growing more enormous. It is all very well to pooh-pooh Mr. George and to prove him mistaken in his political economy. I do not believe that land should be divided because the quantity of it is limited by nature. Of what may this not be said? *A fortiori*, we might on the same principle insist on a division of human wit, for I have observed that the quantity of this has been even more inconveniently limited. Mr. George himself has an inequitably large share of it. But he is right in his impelling motive; right, also, I am convinced, in insisting that humanity makes a part, by far the most important part, of political economy; and in thinking man to be of more concern and more convincing than the longest columns of figures in the world. For unless you include human nature in your addition, your total is sure to be wrong and your deductions from it fallacious. Communism means barbarism, but Socialism means, or wishes to mean, coöperation and community of interests, sympathy, the giving to the hands not so large a share as to the brains, but a larger share than hitherto in the wealth they must combine to produce — means, in short, the practical application of Christianity to life, and has in it the secret of an orderly and benign reconstruction. State Socialism would cut off the very roots in personal character — self-help, forethought, and frugality — which nourish and sustain the trunk and branches of every vigorous Commonwealth.

I do not believe in violent changes, nor do I expect them. Things in possession have a very firm grip. One of the strongest cements of society is the conviction of mankind that the state of things into which they are born is a part of the order of the universe, as natural, let us say, as that the sun should go round the earth. It is a conviction that they will not surrender except on compulsion, and a wise society should look to it that this compulsion be not put upon them. For the individual man there is no radical cure, outside of human nature itself, for the evils to which human nature is heir. The rule will always hold good that you must

“Be your own palace or the world's your gaol.”

But for artificial evils, for evils that spring from want of thought, thought must find a remedy somewhere. There has been no period of time in which wealth has been more sensible of its duties than now. It builds hospitals, it establishes missions among the poor, it endows schools. It is one of the advantages of accumulated wealth, and of the leisure it renders possible, that people have time to think of the wants and sorrows of their fellows. But all these remedies are partial and palliative merely. It is as if we should apply plasters to a single pustule of the small-pox with a view of driving out the disease. The true way is to discover and to extirpate the germs. As society is now constituted these are in the air it breathes, in the water it drinks, in things that seem, and which it has always believed, to be the most innocent and

healthful. The evil elements it neglects corrupt these in their springs and pollute them in their courses. Let us be of good cheer, however, remembering that the misfortunes hardest to bear are those which never come. The world has outlived much, and will outlive a great deal more, and men have contrived to be happy in it. It has shown the strength of its constitution in nothing more than in surviving the quack medicines it has tried. In the scales of the destinies brawn will never weigh so much as brain. Our healing is not in the storm or in the whirlwind, it is not in monarchies, or aristocracies, or democracies, but will be revealed by the still small voice that speaks to the conscience and the heart, prompting us to a wider and wiser humanity.

GARFIELD

SPOKEN ON THE DEATH OF PRESIDENT GARFIELD AT THE
MEMORIAL MEETING IN EXETER HALL, LONDON, 24
SEPTEMBER, 1881.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.¹

ONE thing and one only makes the record of the meeting at Exeter Hall on the 24th September worthy of separate publication, and confers on it a certain distinction. Not what was said, but where it was said, in unison with what other voices, and in what atmosphere of sympathy, as spontaneous as it was universal, gives to the words spoken here their true point and emphasis. Never before have Americans, speaking in England, felt so clearly that they were in the land, not only of their fathers, but of their brethren,

“ Their elder brothers, but one in blood.”

For the first time their common English tongue found its true office when Mother and Daughter spoke comforting words to each other over a sorrow, which, if nearer to one, was shared by both. English blood, made up of the best drops from the veins of many conquering, organizing, and colonizing races, is a blood to be proud of, and most plainly vindicates its claim to dominion when it recognizes kinship through sympathy with what is simple, steadfast, and religious in character. When we

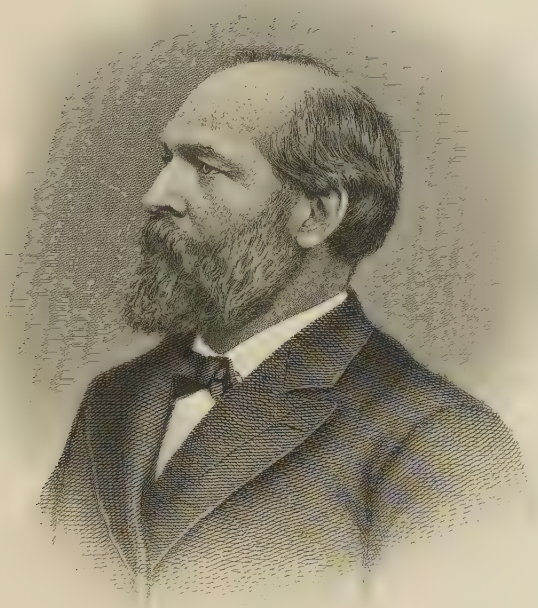
¹ Printed first as a preface to the memorial volume, containing a record of the proceedings at the Exeter Hall meeting.

learn to respect each other for the good qualities in each, we are helping to produce and foster them.

It is often said that sentimental motives never guide or modify the policy of nations, and it is no doubt true that state-craft more and more means business, and not sentiment; yet men as old as the late Lord Stratford de Redcliffe could remember at least two occasions during their lives when a sentiment, and that, too, a literary sentiment, had much to do with the shaping of events and the new birth of nations. We would not over-estimate the permanent value of this outburst of feeling on both sides the sea, of this grasp of the hand across a recent grave, but we may safely affirm that they were genuine, and had, therefore, something of the enduring virtue that belongs to what is genuine, and to that only. It is something that two great nations have looked at each other kindly through their tears. It will at least be more awkward to quarrel hereafter. The sight of the British flag at half-mast on the day of an American funeral was something to set men thinking, and that fruitfully, of the great duty that is laid upon the English race among mankind. Well may we be proud of the Ancient Mother, and we will see to it that she have no reason to be ashamed of her children.

It behoves us Americans who have experienced nothing but the kindness and hospitality and sympathy of England, to express thus publicly our sense of them. Especially would we thank the venerable prelate whose address we are permitted to include in this little volume. And emphatically would we express our conviction that the wreath sent with such touching delicacy of feeling by her Majesty the Queen to be laid upon the bier of President Garfield, will be hung upon a golden nail in the Temple of Concord.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, COUNTRYMEN AND COUNTRYWOMEN: The object of this meeting, as you all know, is to testify our respect for the character and services of the late President Garfield, and in so doing to offer such consolation as is possible to a noble mother and a noble wife, suffering as few women have been called upon to suffer. It may seem a paradox, but the only alleviation of such grief is a sense of the greatness and costliness of the sacrifice that gave birth to it, and this sense is brought home to us by the measure in which others appreciate our loss. It is no exaggeration to say that the recent profoundly touching spectacle of womanly devotedness in its simplicity, its constancy, and its dignity has moved the heart of mankind in a manner without any precedent in living memory. But to Americans everywhere it comes home with a pang of mingled sorrow, pride, and unspeakable domestic tenderness that none but ourselves can feel. This pang is made more poignant by exile, and yet you will all agree with me in feeling that the universal sympathy expressed here by all classes and conditions of men has made us sensible as never before, that, if we are in a strange, we are not in a foreign land, and that if we are not at home we are at least in what Hawthorne so aptly called the Old Home. I should gladly dwell more at length upon this fact, so consoling and so full of all good omen, but I must not infringe on the resolutions which will be presented to you by others. Yet I should do injustice to



J. A. G. Field

your feelings, no less than to my own, if I did not offer here our grateful acknowledgments to the august lady who, herself not unacquainted with grief, has shown so repeatedly and so touchingly how true a woman's heart may beat under the royal purple.

On an occasion like this, when we are met together that we may give vent to a common feeling so deep and so earnest as to thrust aside every consideration of self, the wish of us all must be that what is said here should be simple, strong, and manly as the character of the illustrious magistrate so untimely snatched from us in the very seed-time of noble purpose, that would have sprung up in service as noble, — that we should be as tender and true as she has shown herself to be in whose bereavement we reverently claim to share as children of the blessed country that gave birth to him and to her. We cannot find words that could reach that lofty level. This is no place for the turnings and windings of dexterous rhetoric. In the presence of that death-scene so homely, so human, so august in its unostentatious heroism, the common-places of ordinary eulogy stammer with the sudden shame of their own ineptitude. Were we allowed to follow the natural promptings of our hearts, we would sum up all praise in the sacred old words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

That death-scene was more than singular; it was unexampled. The whole civilized world was gathered about it in the breathless suspense of anxious solicitude, listened to the difficult breathing,

counted the fluttering pulse, was cheered by the momentary rally and saddened by the inevitable relapse. And let us thank God and take courage when we reflect that it was through the manliness, the patience, the religious fortitude of the splendid victim that the tie of human brotherhood was thrilled to a consciousness of its sacred function. The one touch of nature that makes the whole world kin is a touch of heroism, our sympathy with which dignifies and ennobles. Science has wrought no greater marvel in the service of humanity than when it gave the world a common nervous system, and thus made mankind capable of a simultaneous emotion.

One remarkable feature of that death-scene was the imperturbable good nature of the sufferer. This has been sometimes called a peculiarly American quality, — a weakness if in excess or misapplied, but beautiful in its own genial place, as there and then it was. General Garfield once said to a friend, “They tell me it is a defect of my character, but I cannot hate anybody.” Like Socrates, he seemed good-humored even with death, though there have been few men from whom death has ever wrenched a fairer heritage of opportunity. Physicians tell us that all men die well, but surely he was no ordinary man who could die well daily for eleven agonizing weeks, and of whom it could be said at last, —

“He nothing common did, or mean,
Upon that memorable scene.”

A fibre capable of such strain and wear as that is

used only in the making of heroic natures. Twenty years ago General Garfield offered his life to his country, and he has died for her as truly and more fruitfully now than if fate had accepted the offer then. Not only has his blood re-cemented our Union, but the dignity, the patience, the self-restraint, the thoughtfulness for others, the serene valor which he showed under circumstances so disheartening and amid the wreck of hopes so splendid, are a possession and a stimulus to his countrymen forever. The emulation of examples like his makes nations great, and keeps them so. The soil out of which such men as he are made is good to be born on, good to live on, good to die for and to be buried in.

I had not the honor of any intimacy of friendship with this noble man. Others will speak of him from more intimate knowledge. I saw him once or twice only, but so deeply was I impressed with the seriousness and solidity of his character, with his eager interest in worthy objects, and with the statesmanlike furniture of his mind, that when, many years afterwards, he was nominated for the Presidency I rejoiced in the wisdom of the selection, and found in my memory an image of him clearer than that of any man I ever met of whom I had seen so little. And I may add that I have never known any man concerning whom a loving and admiring testimony was so uniform from men of every rank and character who had known him.

“None knew him but to love him,
None named him but to praise.”

I shall not retrace the story of his life, but there is nothing that occurs to me so perfect in its completeness since the Biblical story of Joseph. The poor lad who at thirteen could not read dies at fifty the tenant of an office second in dignity to none on earth, and the world mourns his loss as that of a personal relative. I find the word coming back to my lips in spite of me, "He was so *human*." An example of it was his kissing his venerable mother on the day of his inauguration. It was criticised, I remember hearing at the time, as a sin against good taste. I thought then, and think now, that if we had found the story in Plutarch we should have thought no worse of the hero of it.

It was this pliability of his to the impulse of unconventional feeling that endeared him so much to his kind. Among the many stories that have been sent me, illustrating the sorrow so universally felt here, none have touched me so much as these two: An old gardener said to his mistress, "Oh, ma'am, we felt somehow as if he belonged to us;" and in a little village on the coast, where an evangelist held nightly services on the beach, prayer was offered regularly for the recovery of the President, the weather-beaten fishermen who stood around the preacher with bowed, uncovered heads fervently responding, "Amen." You will also be interested to know that the benevolent Sir Moses Montefiore, now in his ninety-seventh year, telegraphed last week to Palestine to request that prayers might be offered for the President in the synagogues of the four holy cities. It was no common man who could

call forth, and justly call forth, an emotion so universal, an interest so sincere and so humane.

I said that this is no place for eulogy. They who deserve eulogy do not need it, and they who deserve it not are diminished by it. The dead at least can bear the truth, and have a right to that highest service of human speech. We are not called upon here to define Garfield's place among the memorable of mankind. A great man is made up of qualities that meet or make great occasions. We may surely say of him that the great qualities were there, and were always adequate to the need, although, less fortunate than Lincoln, his career was snapped short just as they were about to be tested by the supreme trial of creative statesmanship. We believe that he would have stood the test, and we have good reason for our faith. For this is certainly true of him, that a life more strenuous, a life of more constantly heightening tendency of fulfilment, of more salutary and invigorating example, has not been lived in a country that is rich in instances of such. Well may we be proud of him, this brother of ours, recognized also as a brother wherever men honor what is praiseworthy in man. Well may we thank God for him, and love more the country that could produce and appreciate him. Well may we sorrow for his loss, but not as those without hope. Great as the loss is — and the loss of faculties trained like his is the hardest of all to replace — yet we should show a want of faith in our country if we called it irreparable. Three times within living memory has the

Vice-President succeeded to the presidential function without shock to our system, without detriment to our national honor, and without check to our prosperity. It would be an indignity to discuss here the character of him who is now our chief magistrate, and who, more than any one, it is safe to say, has felt the pain of this blow. But there is no indecorum in saying what is known to all, that he is a gentleman of culture, of admittedly high intelligence, of unimpeachable character, of proved administrative ability, and that he enters on his high duties with a full sense of what such a succession implies. I am not one of those who believe that democracy any more than any other form of government will go of itself. I am not a believer in perpetual motion in politics any more than in mechanics, but, in common with all of you, I have an imperturbable faith in the honesty, the intelligence, and the good sense of the American people, and in the destiny of the American Republic.

STANLEY

SPEECH AT THE MEETING IN THE CHAPTER HOUSE OF
WESTMINSTER ABBEY IN COMMEMORATION OF DEAN
STANLEY, 13 DECEMBER, 1881.

I AM very glad to have the privilege of uniting in this tribute to the memory of the remarkable man whose loss was felt as a personal bereavement by so great and so various a multitude of mourners, and, as has been so well said by his successor, a multitude of mourners which included many who had never seen his face. I feel especially happy because it seems to me that my presence here is an augury of that day, which may be distant, but which I believe will surely come, when the character and services of every eminent man of the British race in every land, under whatever distant skies he may have been born, shall be the common possession and the common inheritance and the common pride of every branch which is sprung from our ancestral stem. As I look round upon this assembly, I feel that I may almost be pardoned if I apply again the well-known line, —

“Si monumentum requiris, circumspice.”

The quality and the character of this meeting are in themselves a monument and a eulogy. It would

be out of place for me to attempt any characterization of Dean Stanley in the presence of those so much more fitted than myself for the task ; but I may be allowed to say a few words from the point of view of a stranger. I remember, on the day of the Dean's funeral, what struck me as most remarkable was seeing all ranks and conditions of men equalized, all differences of creed obliterated, all animosities of sect and party appeased by the touch of that common sympathy in sorrow. The newspapers, as was natural and proper, remarked upon the number of distinguished persons who were present. To me, it seemed vastly more touching to look upon the number of humble and undistinguished persons, who felt that their daily lives had lost a consolation and their hearts a neighbor and a friend. If I were to put in one word what struck me as perhaps the leading characteristic of Dean Stanley, and what made him so dear to many, I should say it was not his charity, though his charity was large, — for charity has in it sometimes, perhaps often, a savor of superiority ; it was not his toleration, — for toleration, I think, is apt to make a concession of what should be simply recognized as a natural right, — but it was rather, as it seems to me, the wonderful many-sidedness of his sympathies. I remember my friend Dr. Holmes, whose name I am sure is known, and if known is dear to most of you, called my attention to an epitaph in the neighborhood of Boston, in New England. It recorded the name and date of the death of a wife and mother, and then added simply, "She

was so pleasant." That always struck me in Dean Stanley. I think no man ever lived who was so pleasant to so many people. We visited him as we visit a clearer sky and a warmer climate. In thinking of this meeting this morning, I was reminded of a proverbial phrase which we have in America, and which, I believe, we carried from England: we apologize for the shortcomings and faults of our fellow-beings by saying, "There is a great deal of human nature in man." I think the one leading characteristic of Dean Stanley — and I say it to his praise — was the amount of human nature there was in him. So sweet, so gracious, so cheerful, so illuminating was it that there could not have been too much of it. It brought him nearer to all mankind, it recognized and called out the humanity that was in other men. His sympathies were so wide that they could not be confined by the boundaries of the land in which he was born: they crossed the channel and they crossed the ocean. No man was a foreigner to him, far less any American. And, in supporting the resolution, I should be inclined to make only one amendment: it would be to propose that the memorial, instead of being national, should be international. Since I came into the room, I have heard from Sir Rutherford Alcock that he has received from Boston, through the hands of Rev. Phillips Brooks, a friend of Dean Stanley, a contribution of £206 toward the Stanley Hall. I am sure I am not pledging my countrymen to too much when I say that they will delight to share in this tribute

to the late Dean. And England has lately given them, in so many ways, such touching and cordial reasons for believing that they cannot enter as strangers to any sorrow of hers, that I am sure you will receive most substantial and most sympathetic help from your kindred people on the other side of the Atlantic, with whom the bonds of sympathy have been lately drawn more close, and by nothing more strikingly than by the sympathy expressed, sir, by your Royal Mother, in a way which touched every heart on the other side of the Atlantic, and has called forth repeated expressions of gratitude. It will give me great pleasure to do all I can to aid the enterprise which is started here to-day.

FIELDING

ADDRESS ON UNVEILING THE BUST OF FIELDING, DELIVERED AT SHIRE HALL, TAUNTON, SOMERSETSHIRE, ENGLAND, 4 SEPTEMBER, 1883.

I SHOULD have preferred that this office I am to perform to-day had fallen to another. Especially does it seem fitting that an English author should take the first place in doing honor to the most thoroughly English of writers; and yet there is something very pleasant to me in thinking that my presence here to-day bears witness to the union of our tongue and of our literary traditions. I seem to be not inappropriately verifying the prophecy of Samuel Daniel made nearly three centuries ago: —

“ And who in time knows whither we may vent
The treasure of our tongue, to what strange shores
The gain of our best glory may be sent
To enrich unknowing nations with our stores?
What worlds in the yet unformed Occident
May come refined with accents that are ours? ”

I wish that I could hope to repay some part, however small, of this obligation by any accents of mine. A whisper will ever and anon make itself heard by the inward ear of literary men, asking the importunate questions, “Pray, do you not ascribe a rather disproportionate relative impor-

tance to the achievements of those of your own craft?" and "Does not genius manifest itself in many other ways, and those of far more practical usefulness to mankind?" No doubt an over-estimate of ourselves and of our own doings is a very common human failing, as we are all ready to admit when we candidly consider our neighbors, and yet the world is led by a true instinct to agree with us in assigning to works of imagination a usefulness higher in kind than any other, and in allowing to their authors a certain right of sanctuary in our affections, within whose limit the ordinary writs of human censure do not run; for not only are the most vivid sensations of which our moral and intellectual nature is capable received through the imagination, but that mysterious faculty, in its loftiest and purest exercise, rescues us from our narrow personality, and lifts us up to regions of serener scope and more ideal satisfaction. It cheats us with a semblance of creative power that seems almost divine, and exhilarates us by a momentary enlargement of the boundaries of our conscious being, as if we had been brought into some nearer relationship with elemental forces. This magic, it is true, is wrought to the full only by the three or four great poets, and by them only in their finest and most emancipated moments. Well may we value this incomparable gift; well may we delight to honor the men who were its depositaries and instruments. Homer and Æschylus, and Dante and Shakespeare, speak to us as to their contemporaries, with an authority accumulated by all the

years between them and us, and with a voice whose very remoteness makes it seem more divinely clear. At the height which these men were sometimes capable of reaching, the processes of the mind seem to be intuitive. But sometimes we find our treasure in more earthen vessels; sometimes this wonder-working faculty is bestowed upon men whose natural and congenial element is the prose of cities and the conventionalized emotion of that artificial life which we are pleased to call real. Here it is forced to combine itself as best it may with the understanding, and it attains its ends — such lower ends as only are possible — through observation and slowly hoarded experience. Even then, though it may have lost its highest, it has not lost all its charm nor all the potency of its sway; for I am inclined to think that it is some form or other, some degree or other, of this *vivida vis* of imagination which breaks the fetters of men's self-consciousness for a while, and enables them to play with their faculties instead of toiling with them — gives them, in short, an indefinably delightful something that we call originality, or, when it addresses itself to artistic creation, genius. A certain sacredness was once attributed to the builders of bridges and makers of roads, and we but follow a natural and praiseworthy impulse when we cherish the memory and record the worth of any man of original and especially of creative mind, since it is the office of such also to open the highway for our fancy and our thought, through the *chiaroscuro* of tangled actualities in which we

dwell, to commerce with fresh forms of nature and new varieties of man. It is the privilege of genius that to it life never grows commonplace as to the rest of us, and that it sees Falstaffs or Don Quixotes or Squire Westerns where we have never seen anything more than the ordinary Toms and Dicks and Harries whom an inscrutable Providence has seen fit to send into an already overpopulated world. These genius takes by the hand and leads through a maze of imaginary adventures; exposes to a cross-play of fictitious circumstances, to the friction of other personages as unreal as themselves, and we exclaim "Why, they are alive; this is creation!" Yes, genius has endowed them with a fulness of life, a completeness of being, such as even they themselves had never dreamed of, and they become truly citizens of the world forever. A great living poet, who has in his own work illustrated every form of imagination, has told us admirably what the secret of this illusory creativeness is, as no one has a better right to know.

" I find first

Writ down for very a b c of fact,
 In the beginning God made heaven and earth,
 From which, no matter in what lisp, I spell
 And speak you out a consequence — that man —
 Man, as befits the made, the inferior thing,
 Purposed since made to grow, not make in turn;
 Yet forced to try and make, else fail to grow,
 Formed to rise, reach at, if not grasp and gain
 The good beyond him; which attempt is growth —
 Repeats God's process in man's due degree,
 A harmony man's proportionate result;
 Creates not, but resuscitates perhaps.
 No less man, bounded, yearning to be free,

May so project his surplusage of soul,
In search of body ; so add self to self,
By owning what lay ownerless before,
So find, so fill full, so appropriate forms.
. . . Though nothing which had never life,
Shall get life from him, be, not having been,
Yet something dead may get to live again."

Now the man whom we are met to commemorate to-day felt this necessity and performed this feat, and his works are become a substantial part of that English literature which may be said not merely to exist, but to live. They have become so, among other reasons, because he had the courage to be absolutely sincere, if he had not always the tact to see where sincerity is out of place. We may discuss, we may estimate him, but we cannot push him from his place. His imagination was of that secondary order of which I have spoken, subdued to what it worked in ; and his creative power is not less in degree than that of more purely ideal artists, but was different in kind, or, if not, is made to seem so by the more vulgar substance in which it wrought. He was inferior also in having no touch of tragic power or passion, though he can be pathetic when he will. There is nowhere a scene more pathetic than that of the supper Amelia prepares for Booth, who never comes to share it, and it is pathos made of materials as homely as Wordsworth himself would have chosen. Certainly Fielding's genius was incapable of that ecstasy of conception through which the poetic imagination seems fused into a molten unity with its material, and produces figures that are typical with-

out loss of characteristic individuality, as if they were drawn, not from what we call real life, but from the very source of life itself, and were cast in that universal mould about which the subtlest thinkers that have ever lived so long busied themselves. Fielding's characters are very real persons; but they are not types in the same sense as Lear and Hamlet. They seem to be men whom we have seen rather than men whom we might see if we were lucky enough, men who have been rather than who might have been. He was especially a humorist; and the weakness of the humorist is that he can never be quite unconscious, for in him it seems as if the two lobes of the brain were never in perfect unison, so that if ever one of them be on the point of surrendering itself to a fine frenzy of unqualified enthusiasm, the other watches it, makes fun of it, renders it uneasy with a vague sense of absurd incongruity, till at last it is forced to laugh when it had rather cry. Heine turned this to his purpose, and this is what makes him so profoundly, and yet sometimes so unpleasantly, pathetic. Shakespeare, as remarkable in this, perhaps, as in anything else, is the only man in whom the rarest poetic power has worked side by side at the same bench with humor, and has not been more or less disenchanted by it. I have lingered so long on general questions, not because I feared to meet more directly an objection which I am told has been made to this tribute of respect and affection for Fielding, but because I doubted whether it was necessary or wise to notice it at all; and yet,

though it must be admitted that his books cannot be recommended *virginibus puerisque*, I will say frankly that it is not because they would corrupt, but because they would shock; and surely this need not affect the fact that he was a great and original genius who has done honor to his country, which is what we chiefly have to consider here. A gallery of Somersetshire worthies from which he was absent would be as incomplete as a history of English literature that should not mention him.

Fielding needs no recognition from us; his fame is established and admitted, and his character is gradually clearing itself of the stains with which malice or jealousy or careless hearsay had darkened it. It has become an established principle of criticism that in judging a man we must take into account the age in which he lived, and which was as truly a part of him as he of it. Fielding's genius has drawn forth the sympathetic commendation of such widely different men as Gibbon, Scott, Coleridge, Thackeray, and Leslie Stephen, and of such a woman as George Eliot. I possess a copy of "Tom Jones," the margins of which are crowded with the admiring comments of Leigh Hunt, as pure-minded a man as ever lived, and a critic whose subtlety of discrimination and whose soundness of judgment, supported as it was on a broad base of truly liberal scholarship, have hardly yet won fitting appreciation. There can be no higher testimonials to character than these; and lately Mr. Austin Dobson has done, perhaps, as true a service as one man of letters ever did to another

by reducing what little is known of the life of Fielding from chaos to coherence by ridding it of fable, by correcting and coördinating dates, by cross-examining tradition till it stammeringly confessed that it had no visible means of subsistence, and has thus enabled us to get some authentic glimpse of the man as he really was. He has rescued the body of Fielding from beneath the swinish hoofs which were trampling it as once they trampled the Knight of La Mancha, whom Fielding so heartily admired. We really know almost as little of Fielding's life as of Shakespeare's, but what we do know on any valid evidence is, I think, on the whole, highly creditable to him. Thrown upon the town at twenty with no training that would fit him for a profession, with the principles and tastes of the class to which he belonged by birth, and with a nominal allowance from his father of £200 a year, which, as he humorously said, "anybody might pay that would," it is possible that when he had money in his pocket he may have spent it in ways that he might blush to remember, and when his pocket was empty may have tried to replenish it by expedients that were not to his taste. But there is no proof of this except what is purely inferential, and there is evidence of the same kind, but stronger, that he had habits of study and industry that are not to be put on at will as one puts on his overcoat, and that are altogether inconsistent with the dissolute life he is supposed to have led. The dramatic pieces that he wrote during his early period were, it is true, shamefully gross,

though there are humorous hints in them that have been profitably worked up by later writers ; but what strikes me most in them is that there is so little real knowledge of life, the result of personal experience, and that the social scenery and conception of character are mainly borrowed from his immediate predecessors, the dramatists of the Restoration. In grossness his plays could not outdo those of Dryden, whose bust has stood so long without protest in Westminster Abbey. As to any harm they can do there is little to be apprehended, for they are mostly as hard to read as a Shapira manuscript. I do not deny that Fielding's temperament was far from being over nice. I am willing to admit, if you will, that the woof of his nature was coarse and animal. I should not stop short of saying that it was sensual. Yet he liked and admired the highest and best things of his time — the art of Hogarth, the acting of Garrick, the verse of Pope. He is said indeed to have loved low company, but his nature was so companionable and his hunger for knowledge so keen, that I fancy he would like any society that was not dull, and any conversation, however illiterate, from which he could learn anything to his purpose. It may be suspected that the polite conversation of the men of that day would differ little, except in grammar, from the talk of the pothouse.

As I have said, we must guard against falling into the anachronism of forgetting the coarseness of the age into which he was born, and whose atmosphere he breathed. It was a generation whose

sense of smell was undisturbed by odors that would now evoke a sanitary commission, and its moral nostrils were of an equally masculine temper. A coarse thread shows itself here and there, even through the satiny surface of the fastidious Gray, and a taint of the century that gave him birth may be detected now and then in the "Doctor" of the pure and altogether admirable Southey. But it is objected that there is an immoral tendency in "Joseph Andrews," "Tom Jones," and "Amelia."

Certainly none of them is calculated to serve the cause of virtue, or at any rate of chastity, if measured by the standard of to-day. But as certainly that standard looks a little awkward in the hands of people who read George Sand and allow an expurgated edition of the Decalogue for the use of them that go in chariots. I confess that in my impatience of such criticism I feel myself tempted, when Fielding's muse shows a too liberal ankle, to cry out with Tam O'Shanter, "Weel dune, cutty sark!" His bluntness is more wholesome than the refinement of such critics, for the second of the Seven Deadly Sins is not less dangerous when she talks mysticism and ogles us through the gaps of a fan painted with the story of the Virgin Martyr. He did not go in search of impurity as if he relished the reek of it, like some French so-called realists for whose title-pages I should be inclined to borrow an inscription from the old tavern-signs, "Entertainment for Man — and Beast." He painted vice when it came in his way (and it was more obvious in his time) as a figure in the

social landscape, and in doing so he was perhaps a better moralist than those who ignore it altogether, or only when it lives in a genteel quarter of the town. He at least does not paint the landscape as a mere background for the naked nymph. He never made the blunder of supposing that the Devil always smelt of sulphur. He thought himself to be writing history, and called his novels *Histories*, as if to warn us that he should tell the whole truth without equivocation. He makes all the sins of his heroes react disastrously on their fortunes. He assuredly believed himself to be writing with an earnest moral purpose in his two greater and more deliberately composed works, and indeed clearly asserts as much. I also fully believe it, for the assertion is justified by all that we know of the prevailing qualities of his character, whatever may have been its failings and lapses, if failings and lapses they were. It does not seem to have occurred to the English clergyman who wrote the epitaph over his grave at Lisbon that there was any question about the matter, and he especially celebrates the moral purpose and effect of Fielding's works in Latin that would, perhaps, have made the subject of it a little uncomfortable. How, then, are we to explain certain scenes in these books, except by supposing that Fielding was utterly unconscious that there was any harm in them? Perhaps we might also say that he was so sincere a hater of cant and sham and hypocrisy that in his wrath against them he was not careful to consider the want of ceremonious decorum in his

protest, and forgot that frankness might stop short of cynicism without losing any of its virtue. He had so hearty an English contempt for sentimentality that he did not always distinguish true sentiment from false, and setting perhaps an over-value on manliness, looked upon refinement as the ornament and protection of womanly weakness rather than as what it quite as truly is — the crown and complement of manly strength. He admired Richardson, and frankly expressed his admiration; yet I think that over a bowl of punch he might have misnamed him the “Homer of Boarding-school Misses,” just as Sainte-Beuve called Octave Feuillet the “Alfred de Musset of Boarding-schools.”

But besides all this, Fielding was a naturalist, in the sense that he was an instinctive and careful observer. He loved truth, and, for an artist, seems to have too often missed the distinction between truth and exactitude. He forgot the warning of Sir Walter Raleigh, perhaps more important to the artist than to the historian, that it is dangerous to follow truth too near the heels. His aim was to paint life as he saw it, not as he wished it was or hoped it might be; to show us what men really did, not what they were pleased to believe they thought it would be well for other men to do: and this he did with a force, a directness, and a vividness of coloring that make him in the truest sense a painter of history. No one can fail to admit the justice of the analogy between him and his friend Hogarth in this respect, pointed out by Mr. Dob-

son. In both cases we may regret that their model was too often no better than she should be. In the case both of Tom Jones and of Booth, it is to be noted, so far as the moral purpose is concerned, that their lapse from virtue always draws after them a retribution which threatens ruin to their dearest desires. I think it was Thackeray who said that Fielding had dared to paint a man — an exploit for which no one would have the courage now.

This is not the place or occasion for a critical estimate of Fielding, even could one add anything of value to what has been already said by competent persons. If there were a recognized standard in criticism, as in apothecaries' measure, so that by adding a grain of praise to this scale, or taking away a scruple of blame from that, we could make the balance manifestly even in the eyes of all men, it might be worth while to weigh Hannibal; but when each of us stamps his own weights, and warrants the impartiality of his own scales, perhaps the experiment may be wisely foregone. Let it suffice here to state generally the reasons for which we set a high value on this man whose bust we unveil to-day. Since we are come together, not to judge, but only to commemorate, perhaps it would be enough to say, in justification of to-day's ceremony, that Fielding was a man of genius; for it is hardly once in a century, if so often, that a whole country catches so rare and shy a specimen of the native fauna, and proportionably more seldom that a county is so lucky. But Fielding was something more even than this. It is not extravagant to say

that he marks an epoch, and that we date from him the beginning of a consciously new form of literature. It was not without reason that Byron, expanding a hint given somewhere by Fielding himself, called him "the prose Homer of human nature." He had more than that superficial knowledge of literature which no gentleman's head should be without. He knew it as a craftsman knows the niceties and traditions of his craft. He saw that since the epic in verse ceased to be recited in the market-places, it had become an anachronism ; that nothing but the charm of narrative had saved Ariosto, as Tasso had been saved by his diction, and Milton by his style ; but that since Milton every epic had been born as dead as the Pharaohs — more dead, if possible, than the "Columbiad" of Joel Barlow and the "Charlemagne" of Lucien Bonaparte are to us. He saw that the novel of actual life was to replace it, and he set himself deliberately (after having convinced himself experimentally in *Parson Adams* that he could create character) to produce an epic on the lower and more neighborly level of prose. However opinions may differ as to the other merits of "*Tom Jones*," they are unanimous as to its harmony of design and masterliness of structure.

Fielding, then, was not merely, in my judgment at least, an original writer, but an originator. He has the merit, whatever it may be, of inventing the realistic novel, as it is called. I do not mean to say that there had been no stories professedly of real life before. The story of "*Francion*" is such, and

even more notably "Gil Blas," not to mention others. But before Fielding it seems to me that real life formed rather the scenic background than the substance, and that the characters are, after all, merely players who represent certain types rather than the living types themselves. Fielding, as a novelist, drew the motives that impel his characters in all their actions from human nature, and not from artificial life. When I read "Gil Blas," I do not become part of the story — I listen to an agreeable story-teller who narrates and describes, and I wait to hear what is going to happen ; but in Fielding I want to see what people are going to do and say, and I can half guess what will happen, because I know them and what they are and what they are likely to do. They are no longer images, but actual beings. Nothing can persuade me, for example, that I do not know the sound of Squire Western's voice.

Fielding did not and could not idealize, his object being exact truth, but he realized the actual truth around him as none had done before and few have done since. As a creator of characters that are actuated by a motive power within themselves, and that are so livingly real as to become our familiar acquaintances, he is among the greatest. Abraham Adams is excellent, and has had a numerous progeny, but I think that even he is inferior in originality, in coherence, and in the entire keeping of look, speech, motive, and action, to Squire Western, who is, indeed, one of the most simple and perfect creations of genius. If he has been

less often copied than Parson Adams, may it not be because he is a more finished work of art, and, therefore, more difficult to copy? I need not expatiate on the simple felicity and courteousness of his style, the unobtrusive clothing of a thought as clear as it is often profound, or on the good-nature of his satire, in which he reminds one of Chaucer, or on the subtle gravity of his irony, more delicate than that of Swift, and, therefore, perhaps even more deadly. I will only say that I think it less perfect, because more obviously intentional, in "Jonathan Wild" than in such masterpieces as the account of Captain Blifil's death, and the epitaph upon his tomb. When it seems most casual and inadvertent, it often cuts deepest, as when Squire Western, impatient of Parson Supple's intervention, says to him, "Arn't in pulpit now; when art a got up there then I never mind what dost say." I must not forget to say a word of his dialogue, which, except where he wishes to show off his attainments in classical criticism, as in some chapters of "Amelia," is altogether so admirably spirited and characteristic that it makes us wonder at his failure as a dramatist. We may read Fielding's character clearly in his books, for it was not complex, but especially in his "Voyage to Lisbon," where he reveals it in artless inadvertence. He was a lovingly thoughtful husband, a tender father, a good brother, a useful and sagacious magistrate. He was courageous, gentle, thoroughly conscious of his own dignity as a gentleman, and able to make that dignity respected. If we seek for a single

characteristic which more than any other would sum him up, we should say that it was his absolute manliness, a manliness in its type English from top to toe. It is eminently fitting, therefore, that the reproduction of his features, which I am about to unveil, should be from the hand of a woman. Let me close with a quotation which was a favorite with Fielding: —

“ Verum ubi plura nitent, . . . non ego paucis
Offendar maculis, quas aut incuria fudit,
Aut humana parum cavit natura.”

COLERIDGE

ADDRESS ON UNVEILING THE BUST OF COLERIDGE, IN
WESTMINSTER ABBEY, 7 MAY, 1885.

I SHOULD have preferred for many reasons, on which I need not dwell, for they must be present to the minds of all who hear me, that the duty I have undertaken to perform here to-day had fallen to other hands. But the fact that this memorial of one who, if not a great poet and a great teacher, had in him the almost over-abundant materials of both, is the gift of one of my countrymen, the late Rev. Dr. Mercer, of Newport, Rhode Island, through his executrix, Mrs. Pell, seems to supply that argument of fitness that would otherwise have been absent. It does more, and for this I prize it the more; it adds a fresh proof, if any were needed, that not all the waters of that ocean which divides but cannot divorce them can wash out of the consciousness of either nation the feeling that we hold our intellectual property in common, that we own allegiance to the same moral and literary traditions, and that the fame of those who have shed lustre on our race, as it is an undivided inheritance, so it imposes an equal debt of gratitude, an equal responsibility, on the two great branches of it. Twice before I have had the honor of



near London
S. T. Coleridge

speaking within the precincts of this structure, the double sanctuary of religion and renown, surely the most venerable of ecclesiastical buildings to men of English blood. Once again I was a silent spectator while his body was laid here to mingle with consecrated earth who more deeply than any other in modern times had penetrated with the ferment of his thought the thinking of mankind, an event of deep significance as the proclamation of that truce between science and religion which is, let us hope, the forerunner of their ultimate reconciliation. When I spoke here it was in commemoration of personal friends, one of them the late Dean Stanley, dear to all who knew him; the other an American poet, dear to all who speak the English tongue. It is to commemorate another friend that I come here to-day, for who so worthy of the name as one who was our companion and teacher in the happiest hours of our youth, made doubly happy by the charm of his genius, and who to our old age brings back, if not the presence, at least the radiant image of the youth we have lost? Surely there are no friends so constant as the poets, and among them, I think, none more faithful than Coleridge. I am glad to have a share in this reparation of a long injustice, for as we looked about us hitherto in Poet's Corner we were tempted to ask, as Cavalcante dei Cavalcanti did of Dante, If these are here through loftiness of genius, where is he? It is just fifty-one years ago that I became the possessor of an American reprint of Galignani's edition of Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats

in one volume. It was a pirated book, and I trust I may be pardoned for the delight I had in it. I take comfort from the thought that there must be many a Scottish minister and laird now in Heaven who liked their claret none the less that it had paid no tribute to the House of Hanover. I have heard this trinity of poets taxed with incongruity. As for me, I was grateful for such infinite riches in a little room, and never thought of looking a Pegasus in the mouth whose triple burden proved a stronger back than that even of the Templars' traditional steed. Much later, but still long ago, I read the "Friend," the "Biographia Literaria," and other prose works of Coleridge. In what may be given me to say I shall be obliged to trust chiefly to a memory which at my time of life is gradually becoming one of her own reminiscences, and is forced to compound as best she may with her inexorable creditor, Oblivion. But perhaps she will serve me all the better for the matter in hand, for what is proper here is at most a rapid generalization rather than a demonstration in detail of his claims to grateful remembrance. I shall naturally trust myself to judge him by his literary rather than by his metaphysical achievement. In the latter region I cannot help being reminded of the partiality he so often betrays for clouds, and see him, to use his own words, "making the shifting clouds seem what you please," or "a traveller go from mount to mount through cloudland, gorgeous land." Or sometimes I think of him as an alchemist in search of the philosopher's stone, and stripping the lead, not only from

his own roof, but from that of the parish church itself, to quench the fiery thirst of his alembic. He seems never to have given up the hope of finding in the imagination some universal solvent, some *magisterium majus*, by which the lead of scepticism should be transmuted into the pure gold of faith, or, at least, persuaded to believe itself so. But we should not forget that many earnest and superior minds found his cloud castles solid habitations, nor that alchemy was the nursing mother of chemistry. He certainly was a main influence in showing the English mind how it could emancipate itself from the vulgarizing tyranny of common sense, and teaching it to recognize in the imagination an important factor not only in the happiness but in the destiny of man. In criticism he was, indeed, a teacher and interpreter whose service was incalculable. He owed much to Lessing, something to Schiller, and more to the younger Schlegel, but he owed most to his own sympathetic and penetrative imagination. This was the lifted torch (to borrow his own words again) that bade the starry walls of passages, dark before to the apprehension of even the most intelligent reader, sparkle with a lustre, latent in them to be sure, but not all their own. As Johnson said of Burke, he wound into his subject like a serpent. His analysis was elucidative mainly, if you will, but could not have been so except in virtue of the processes of constructive and philosophical criticism that had gone on so long in his mind as to make its subtle apprehension seem an instinct.

As he was the first to observe some of the sky's appearances and some of the shyer revelations of outward nature, so he was also first in noting some of the more occult phenomena of thought and emotion. It is a criticism of parts and passages, and was scattered carelessly in *obiter dicta*, but it was not a bringing of the brick as a specimen of the whole house. It was comparative anatomy, far rather, which from a single bone reconstructs the entire living organism. Many of his hints and suggestions are more pregnant than whole treatises, as where he says that the wit of Hudibras is the wit of thought.

But what I think constitutes his great power, as it certainly is his greatest charm, is the perpetual presence of imagination, as constant a quality with him as fancy is with Calderon. She was his life-long housemate, if not always hanging over his shoulders and whispering in his ear, yet within easy call, like the Abra of Prior —

“Abra was with him ere he spoke her name,
And if he called another, Abra came.”

It was she who gave him that power of sympathy which made his Wallenstein what I may call the most original translation in our language, unless some of the late Mr. Fitzgerald's be reckoned such. He was not exact any more than Chapman. The molten material of his mind, too abundant for the capacity of the mould, overflowed it in gushes of fiery excess. But the main object of translation he accomplishes. Poetry is reproduced as poetry, and genius shows itself as genius, patent even in

the march of the verse. As a poet, the impression he made upon his greater contemporaries will, I believe, be the ultimate verdict of criticism. They all thought of him what Scott said of him, "No man has all the resources of poetry in such profusion. . . . His fancy and diction would long ago have placed him above all his contemporaries had they been under the direction of a sound judgment and a steady will." No doubt we have in Coleridge the most striking example in literature of a great genius given in trust to a nerveless will and a fitful purpose. But I think the secret of his doing no more in poetry is to be found in the fact that the judgment, so far from being absent, grew to be there in excess. His critical sense rose like a forbidding apparition in the path of his poetic production. I have heard of a military engineer who knew so well how a bridge should be built that he could never build one. It certainly was not wholly indolence that was to blame in Coleridge's case, for though he used to say early in life that he had no "finger industry," yet he left behind him a mass of correspondence, and his letters are generally long. But I do not care to discuss a question the answer to which must be left mainly to conjecture or to the instinct of individual temperament. It is enough for us here that he has written some of the most poetical poetry in the language, and one poem, the "Ancient Mariner," not only unparalleled, but unapproached in its kind, and that kind of the rarest. It is marvellous in its mastery over that delightfully fortuitous inconsequence that

is the adamantine logic of dreamland. Coleridge has taken the old ballad measure and given to it by an indefinable charm wholly his own all the sweetness, all the melody and compass of a symphony. And how picturesque it is in the proper sense of the word. I know nothing like it. There is not a description in it. It is all picture. Descriptive poets generally confuse us with multiplicity of detail; we cannot see their forest for the trees; but Coleridge never errs in this way. With instinctive tact he touches the right chord of association, and is satisfied, as we also are. I should find it hard to explain the singular charm of his diction, there is so much nicety of art and purpose in it, whether for music or meaning. Nor does it need any explanation, for we all feel it. The words seem common words enough, but in the order of them, in the choice, variety, and position of the vowel-sounds they become magical. The most decrepit vocable in the language throws away its crutches to dance and sing at his piping. I cannot think it a personal peculiarity, but a matter of universal experience, that more bits of Coleridge have imbedded themselves in my memory than of any other poet who delighted my youth — unless I should except the sonnets of Shakespeare. This argues perfectness of expression. Let me cite an example or two: —

“The sun’s rim dips, the stars rush out,
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper through the dark
Off shot the spectre barque.”

Or take this as a bit of landscape : —

“ Beneath yon birch with silver bark
And boughs so pendulous and fair,
The brook falls scattered down the rock,
And all is mossy there.”

It is a perfect little picture and seems so easily done. But try to do something like it. Coleridge's words have the unashamed nakedness of Scripture, of the Eden of diction ere the voluble serpent had entered it. This felicity of speech in Coleridge's best verse is the more remarkable because it was an acquisition. His earlier poems are apt to be turgid, in his prose there is too often a languor of profuseness, and there are pages where he seems to be talking to himself and not to us, as I have heard a guide do in the tortuous caverns of the Catacombs when he was doubtful if he had not lost his way. But when his genius runs freely and full in his prose, the style, as he said of Pascal, “is a garment of light.” He knew all our best prose and knew the secret of its composition. When he is well inspired, as in his best poetry he commonly is, he gives us the very quintessence of perception, the clearly crystallized precipitation of all that is most precious in the ferment of impression after the impertinent and obtrusive particulars have evaporated from the memory. It is the pure visual ecstasy disengaged from the confused and confusing material that gave it birth. It seems the very beatitude of artless simplicity, and is the most finished product of art. I know nothing so perfect in its kind since Dante. The tiny landscape I have cited reminds me in its laconic adequacy of —

“ *Li ruscelletti che de' verdi colli
Del Casentin discendon giuso in Arno,
Faccendo i lor canali e freddi e molli.* ”

I confess that I prefer the “Ancient Mariner” to “Christabel,” fine as that poem is in parts and tantalizing as it is in the suggestion of deeper meanings than were ever there. The “Ancient Mariner” seems to have come of itself. In “Christabel” I fancy him saying, “Go to, let us write an imaginative poem.” It never could be finished on those terms.

This is not the time nor the place to pass judgment on Coleridge the man. Doubtless it would have been happier for him had he been endowed with the business faculty that makes his friend Wordsworth so almost irritatingly respectable. But would it have been happier for us? We are here to-day not to consider what Coleridge owed to himself, to his family, or to the world, but what we owe to him. Let us at least not volunteer to draw his frailties from their dread abode. Our own are a far more profitable subject of contemplation. Let the man of imaginative temperament, who has never procrastinated, who has made all that was possible of his powers, cast the first stone. The cairn, I think, will not be as tall as Hector's. With Coleridge I believe the opium to have been congenital, and if we may judge by many a profoundly pathetic cry both in his poems and his letters, he answered grievously for his frailties during the last thirty years of his life. In an unpublished letter of his he says, speaking of another, but

thinking certainly of himself, "An unfortunate man, enemy to himself only, and like all of that character expiating his faults by suffering beyond what the severest judge would have inflicted as their due punishment." There let us leave it, for nothing is more certain than that our personal weaknesses exact the uttermost farthing of penalty from us while we live. Even in the dilapidation of his powers, due chiefly, if you will, to his own unthrifty management of them, we might, making proper deductions, apply to him what Mark Antony says of the dead Cæsar —

"He was the ruins of the noblest man
That ever lived in the tide of time."

Whatever may have been his faults and weaknesses, he was the man of all his generation to whom we should most unhesitatingly allow the distinction of genius, that is, of one authentically possessed from time to time by some influence that made him better and greater than himself. If he lost himself too much in what Mr. Pater has admirably called "impassioned contemplation," he has at least left us such a legacy as only genius, and genius not always, can leave. It is for this that we pay him this homage of memory. He himself has said that —

"It seems like stories from the land of spirits
If any man obtain that which he merits,
Or any merit that which he attains."

Both conditions are fulfilled to-day.

BOOKS AND LIBRARIES

ADDRESS AT THE OPENING OF THE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN CHELSEA, MASSACHUSETTS, 22 DECEMBER, 1885.

A FEW years ago my friend, Mr. Alexander Ireland, published a very interesting volume which he called "The Book-Lover's Enchiridion," the handbook, that is to say, of those who love books. It was made up of extracts from the writings of a great variety of distinguished men, ancient and modern, in praise of books. It was a chorus of many voices in many tongues, a hymn of gratitude and praise, full of such piety and fervor as can be paralleled only in songs dedicated to the supreme Power, the supreme Wisdom, and the supreme Love. Nay, there is a glow of enthusiasm and sincerity in it which is often painfully wanting in those other too commonly mechanical compositions. We feel at once that here it is out of the fulness of the heart, yes, and of the head, too, that the mouth speaketh. Here was none of that compulsory commonplace which is wont to characterize those "testimonials of celebrated authors," by means of which publishers sometimes strive to linger out the passage of a hopeless book toward its *requiescat* in oblivion. These utterances which Mr. Ireland has gathered lovingly together are

stamped with that spontaneousness which is the mint-mark of all sterling speech. It is true that they are mostly, as is only natural, the utterances of literary men, and there is a well-founded proverbial distrust of herring that bear only the brand of the packer, and not that of the sworn inspector. But to this objection a cynic might answer with the question, "Are authors so prone, then, to praise the works of other people that we are to doubt them when they do it unasked?" Perhaps the wisest thing I could have done to-night would have been to put upon the stand some of the more weighty of this cloud of witnesses. But since your invitation implied that I should myself say something, I will endeavor to set before you a few of the commonplaces of the occasion, as they may be modified by passing through my own mind, or by having made themselves felt in my own experience.

The greater part of Mr. Ireland's witnesses testify to the comfort and consolation they owe to books, to the refuge they have found in them from sorrow or misfortune, to their friendship, never estranged and outliving all others. This testimony they volunteered. Had they been asked, they would have borne evidence as willingly to the higher and more general uses of books in their service to the commonwealth, as well as to the individual man. Consider, for example, how a single page of Burke may emancipate the young student of politics from narrow views and merely contemporaneous judgments. Our English ancestors, with that common-sense which is one of the most useful,

though not one of the most engaging, properties of the race, made a rhyming proverb, which says that —

“ When land and goods are gone and spent,
Then learning is most excellent ; ”

and this is true so far as it goes, though it goes perhaps hardly far enough. The law also calls only the earth and what is immovably attached to it *real* property, but I am of opinion that those only are real possessions which abide with a man after he has been stripped of those others falsely so called, and which alone save him from seeming and from being the miserable forked radish to which the bitter scorn of Lear degraded every child of Adam. The riches of scholarship, the benignities of literature defy fortune and outlive calamity. They are beyond the reach of thief or moth or rust. As they cannot be inherited, so they cannot be alienated. But they may be shared, they may be distributed, and it is the object and office of a free public library to perform these beneficent functions.

“ Books,” says Wordsworth, “ are a real world,” and he was thinking, doubtless, of such books as are not merely the triumphs of pure intellect, however supreme, but of those in which intellect infused with the sense of beauty aims rather to produce delight than conviction, or, if conviction, then through intuition rather than formal logic, and, leaving what Donne wisely calls —

“ Unconcerning things matters of fact ”

to science and the understanding, seeks to give ideal expression to those abiding realities of the

spiritual world for which the outward and visible world serves at best but as the husk and symbol. Am I wrong in using the word *realities*? wrong in insisting on the distinction between the real and the actual? in assuming for the ideal an existence as absolute and self subsistent as that which appeals to our senses, nay, so often cheats them, in the matter of fact? How very small a part of the world we truly live in is represented by what speaks to us through the senses when compared with that vast realm of the mind which is peopled by memory and imagination, and with such shining inhabitants! These walls, these faces, what are they in comparison with the countless images, the innumerable population which every one of us can summon up to the tiny show-box of the brain, in material breadth scarce a span, yet infinite as space and time? and in what, I pray, are those we gravely call historical characters, of which each new historian strains his neck to get a new and different view, in any sense more real than the personages of fiction? Do not serious and earnest men discuss Hamlet as they would Cromwell or Lincoln? Does Cæsar, does Alaric, hold existence by any other or stronger tenure than the Christian of Bunyan or the Don Quixote of Cervantes or the Antigone of Sophocles? Is not the history which is luminous because of an indwelling and perennial truth to nature, because of that light which never was on land or sea, really *more* true, in the highest sense, than many a weary chronicle with names and date and place in which "an Amurath to Amurath suc-

ceeds"? Do we know as much of any authentic Danish prince as of Hamlet?

But to come back a little nearer to Chelsea and the occasion that has called us together. The founders of New England, if sometimes, when they found it needful, an impracticable, were always a practical people. Their first care, no doubt, was for an adequate supply of powder, and they encouraged the manufacture of musket bullets by enacting that they should pass as currency at a farthing each — a coinage nearer to its nominal value and not heavier than some with which we are familiar. Their second care was that "good learning should not perish from among us," and to this end they at once established the Grammar (Latin) School in Boston, and soon after the college at Cambridge. The nucleus of this was, as you all know, the bequest in money by John Harvard. Hardly less important, however, was the legacy of his library, a collection of good books, inconsiderable measured by the standard of to-day, but very considerable then as the possession of a private person. From that little acorn what an oak has sprung, and from its acorns again what a vocal forest, as old Howell would have called it, — old Howell whom I love to cite, because his name gave their title to the "Essays of Elia," and is borne with slight variation by one of the most delightful of modern authors. It was, in my judgment, those two foundations, more than anything else, which gave to New England character its bent, and to Boston that literary supremacy which, I am told, she is in danger of

losing, but which she will not lose till she and all the world lose Holmes.

The opening of a free public library, then, is a most important event in the history of any town. A college training is an excellent thing ; but, after all, the better part of every man's education is that which he gives himself, and it is for this that a good library should furnish the opportunity and the means. I have sometimes thought that our public schools undertook to teach too much, and that the older system, which taught merely the three R's, and taught them well, leaving natural selection to decide who should go farther, was the better. However this may be, all that is primarily needful in order to use a library is the ability to read. I say primarily, for there must also be the inclination, and, after that, some guidance in reading well. Formerly the duty of a librarian was considered too much that of a watch-dog, to keep people as much as possible away from the books, and to hand these over to his successor as little worn by use as he could. Librarians now, it is pleasant to see, have a different notion of their trust, and are in the habit of preparing, for the direction of the inexperienced, lists of such books as they think best worth reading. Cataloguing has also, thanks in great measure to American librarians, become a science, and catalogues, ceasing to be labyrinths without a clue, are furnished with finger-posts at every turn. Subject catalogues again save the beginner a vast deal of time and trouble by supplying him for nothing with one at least of the

results of thorough scholarship, the knowing where to look for what he wants. I do not mean by this that there is or can be any short cut to learning, but that there may be, and is, such a short cut to information that will make learning more easily accessible.

But have you ever rightly considered what the mere ability to read means? That it is the key which admits us to the whole world of thought and fancy and imagination? to the company of saint and sage, of the wisest and the wittiest at their wisest and wittiest moment? That it enables us to see with the keenest eyes, hear with the finest ears, and listen to the sweetest voices of all time? More than that, it annihilates time and space for us; it revives for us without a miracle the Age of Wonder, endowing us with the shoes of swiftness and the cap of darkness, so that we walk invisible like fern-seed, and witness unharmed the plague at Athens or Florence or London; accompany Cæsar on his marches, or look in on Catiline in council with his fellow conspirators, or Guy Fawkes in the cellar of St. Stephen's. We often hear of people who will descend to any servility, submit to any insult, for the sake of getting themselves or their children into what is euphemistically called good society. Did it ever occur to them that there is a select society of all the centuries to which they and theirs can be admitted for the asking, a society, too, which will not involve them in ruinous expense and still more ruinous waste of time and health and faculties?

Southey tells us that, in his walk one stormy day, he met an old woman, to whom, by way of greeting, he made the rather obvious remark that it was dreadful weather. She answered, philosophically, that, in her opinion, "*any* weather was better than none!" I should be half inclined to say that any reading was better than none, allaying the crudeness of the statement by the Yankee proverb, which tells us that, though "all deacons are good, there's odds in deacons." Among books, certainly, there is much variety of company, ranging from the best to the worst, from Plato to Zola, and the first lesson in reading well is that which teaches us to distinguish between literature and merely printed matter. The choice lies wholly with ourselves. We have the key put into our hands; shall we unlock the pantry or the oratory? There is a Wallachian legend which, like most of the figments of popular fancy, has a moral in it. One Bakála, a good-for-nothing kind of fellow in his way, having had the luck to offer a sacrifice especially well pleasing to God, is taken up into heaven. He finds the Almighty sitting in something like the best room of a Wallachian peasant's cottage — there is always a profound pathos in the homeliness of the popular imagination, forced, like the princess in the fairy tale, to weave its semblance of gold tissue out of straw. On being asked what reward he desires for the good service he has done, Bakála, who had always passionately longed to be the owner of a bagpipe, seeing a half worn-out one lying among some rubbish in a corner of the room, begs eagerly

that it may be bestowed on him. The Lord, with a smile of pity at the meanness of his choice, grants him his boon, and Bakála goes back to earth delighted with his prize. With an infinite possibility within his reach, with the choice of wisdom, of power, of beauty at his tongue's end, he asked according to his kind, and his sordid wish is answered with a gift as sordid. Yes, there is a choice in books as in friends, and the mind sinks or rises to the level of its habitual society, is subdued, as Shakespeare says of the dyer's hand, to what it works in. Cato's advice, *cum bonis ambula*, consort with the good, is quite as true if we extend it to books, for they, too, insensibly give away their own nature to the mind that converses with them. They either beckon upwards or drag down. *Du gleichst dem Geist den du begreifst*, says the World Spirit to Faust, and this is true of the ascending no less than of the descending scale. Every book we read may be made a round in the ever-lengthening ladder by which we climb to knowledge and to that temperance and serenity of mind which, as it is the ripest fruit of Wisdom, is also the sweetest. But this can only be if we read such books as make us think, and read them in such a way as helps them to do so, that is, by endeavoring to judge them, and thus to make them an exercise rather than a relaxation of the mind. Desultory reading, except as conscious pastime, hebetates the brain and slackens the bow-string of Will. It communicates as little intelligence as the messages that run along the telegraph wire to the

birds that perch on it. Few men learn the highest use of books. After lifelong study many a man discovers too late that to have had the philosopher's stone availed nothing without the philosopher to use it. Many a scholarly life, stretched like a talking wire to bring the wisdom of antiquity into communion with the present, can at last yield us no better news than the true accent of a Greek verse, or the translation of some filthy nothing scrawled on the walls of a brothel by some Pompeian idler. And it is certainly true that the material of thought reacts upon the thought itself. Shakespeare himself would have been commonplace had he been paddocked in a thinly shaven vocabulary, and Phidias, had he worked in wax, only a more inspired Mrs. Jarley. A man is known, says the proverb, by the company he keeps, and not only so, but made by it. Milton makes his fallen angels grow small to enter the infernal council room, but the soul, which God meant to be the spacious chamber where high thoughts and generous aspirations might commune together, shrinks and narrows itself to the measure of the meaner company that is wont to gather there, hatching conspiracies against our better selves. We are apt to wonder at the scholarship of the men of three centuries ago and at a certain dignity of phrase that characterizes them. They were scholars because they did not read so many things as we. They had fewer books, but these were of the best. Their speech was noble, because they lunched with Plutarch and supped with Plato. We spend as much

time over print as they did, but instead of communing with the choice thoughts of choice spirits, and unconsciously acquiring the grand manner of that supreme society, we diligently inform ourselves, and cover the continent with a cobweb of telegraphs to inform us, of such inspiring facts as that a horse belonging to Mr. Smith ran away on Wednesday, seriously damaging a valuable carry-all; that a son of Mr. Brown swallowed a hickory nut on Thursday; and that a gravel bank caved in and buried Mr. Robinson alive on Friday. Alas, it is we ourselves that are getting buried alive under this avalanche of earthy impertinences! It is we who, while we might each in his humble way be helping our fellows into the right path, or adding one block to the climbing spire of a fine soul, are willing to become mere sponges saturated from the stagnant goosepond of village gossip. This is the kind of news we compass the globe to catch, fresh from Bungtown Centre, when we might have it fresh from heaven by the electric lines of poet or prophet! It is bad enough that we should be compelled to know so many nothings, but it is downright intolerable that we must wash so many barrow-loads of gravel to find a grain of mica after all. And then to be told that the ability to read makes us all shareholders in the Bonanza Mine of Universal Intelligence!

One is sometimes asked by young people to recommend a course of reading. My advice would be that they should confine themselves to the supreme books in whatever literature, or still better

to choose some one great author, and make themselves thoroughly familiar with him. For, as all roads lead to Rome, so do they likewise lead away from it, and you will find that, in order to understand perfectly and weigh exactly any vital piece of literature, you will be gradually and pleasantly persuaded to excursions and explorations of which you little dreamed when you began, and will find yourselves scholars before you are aware. For remember that there is nothing less profitable than scholarship for the mere sake of scholarship, nor anything more wearisome in the attainment. But the moment you have a definite aim, attention is quickened, the mother of memory, and all that you acquire groups and arranges itself in an order that is lucid, because everywhere and always it is in intelligent relation to a central object of constant and growing interest. This method also forces upon us the necessity of thinking, which is, after all, the highest result of all education. For what we want is not learning, but knowledge; that is, the power to make learning answer its true end as a quickener of intelligence and a widener of our intellectual sympathies. I do not mean to say that every one is fitted by nature or inclination for a definite course of study, or indeed for serious study in any sense. I am quite willing that these should "browse in a library," as Dr. Johnson called it, to their hearts' content. It is, perhaps, the only way in which time may be profitably wasted. But desultory reading will not make a "full man," as Bacon understood it, of one who has not Johnson's

memory, his power of assimilation, and, above all, his comprehensive view of the relations of things. "Read not," says Lord Bacon, in his *Essay of Studies*, "to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously [carefully], and some few to be read wholly and with diligence and attention. *Some books also may be read by deputy.*" This is weighty and well said, and I would call your attention especially to the wise words with which the passage closes. The best books are not always those which lend themselves to discussion and comment, but those (like Montaigne's *Essays*) which discuss and comment ourselves.

I have been speaking of such books as should be chosen for profitable reading. A public library, of course, must be far wider in its scope. It should contain something for all tastes, as well as the material for a thorough grounding in all branches of knowledge. It should be rich in books of reference, in encyclopædias, where one may learn without cost of research what things are generally known. For it is far more useful to know these than to know those that are *not* generally known. Not to know them is the defect of those half-trained and therefore hasty men who find a mare's nest on every branch of the tree of knowledge. A library should contain ample stores of history, which, if it do not

always deserve the pompous title which Bolingbroke gave it, of philosophy teaching by example, certainly teaches many things profitable for us to know and lay to heart; teaches, among other things, how much of the present is still held in mortmain by the past; teaches that, if there be no controlling purpose, there is, at least, a sternly logical sequence in human affairs, and that chance has but a trifling dominion over them; teaches why things are and must be so and not otherwise, and that, of all hopeless contests, the most hopeless is that which fools are most eager to challenge — with the Nature of Things; teaches, perhaps, more than anything else, the value of personal character as a chief factor in what used to be called destiny, for that cause is strong which has not a multitude, but one strong man behind it. History is, indeed, mainly the biography of a few imperial men, and forces home upon us the useful lesson how infinitesimally important our own private affairs are to the universe in general. History is clarified experience, and yet how little do men profit by it; nay, how should we expect it of those who so seldom are taught anything by their own! Delusions, especially economical delusions, seem the only things that have any chance of an earthly immortality. I would have plenty of biography. It is no insignificant fact that eminent men have always loved their Plutarch, since example, whether for emulation or avoidance, is never so poignant as when presented to us in a striking personality. Autobiographies are also instructive reading to the student of human

nature, though generally written by men who are more interesting to themselves than to their fellow men. I have been told that Emerson and George Eliot agreed in thinking Rousseau's "Confessions" the most interesting book they had ever read.

A public library should also have many and full shelves of political economy, for the dismal science, as Carlyle called it, if it prove nothing else, will go far towards proving that theory is the bird in the bush, though she sing more sweetly than the nightingale, and that the millennium will not hasten its coming in deference to the most convincing string of resolutions that were ever unanimously adopted in public meeting. It likewise induces in us a profound and wholesome distrust of social panaceas.

I would have a public library abundant in translations of the best books in all languages, for, though no work of genius can be adequately translated, because every word of it is permeated with what Milton calls "the precious life-blood of a master spirit" which cannot be transfused into the veins of the best translation, yet some acquaintance with foreign and ancient literatures has the liberalizing effect of foreign travel. He who travels by translation travels more hastily and superficially, but brings home something that is worth having, nevertheless. Translations properly used, by shortening the labor of acquisition, add as many years to our lives as they subtract from the processes of our education. Looked at from any but the æsthetic point of view, translations retain whatever

property was in their originals to enlarge, liberalize, and refine the mind. At the same time I would have also the originals of these translated books as a temptation to the study of languages, which has a special use and importance of its own in teaching us to understand the niceties of our mother tongue. The practice of translation, by making us deliberate in the choice of the best equivalent of the foreign word in our own language, has likewise the advantage of continually schooling us in one of the main elements of a good style, — precision; and precision of thought is not only exemplified by precision of language, but is largely dependent on the habit of it.

In such a library the sciences should be fully represented, that men may at least learn to know in what a marvellous museum they live, what a wonder-worker is giving them an exhibition daily for nothing. Nor let Art be forgotten in all its many forms, not as the antithesis of Science, but as her elder or fairer sister, whom we love all the more that her usefulness cannot be demonstrated in dollars and cents. I should be thankful if every day-laborer among us could have his mind illumined, as those of Athens and of Florence had, with some image of what is best in architecture, painting, and sculpture, to train his crude perceptions and perhaps call out latent faculties. I should like to see the works of Ruskin within the reach of every artisan among us. For I hope some day that the delicacy of touch and accuracy of eye that have made our mechanics in some

departments the best in the world, may give us the same supremacy in works of wider range and more purely ideal scope.

Voyages and travels I would also have, good store, especially the earlier, when the world was fresh and unhackneyed and men saw things invisible to the modern eye. They are fast sailing ships to waft away from present trouble to the Fortunate Isles.

To wash down the drier morsels that every library must necessarily offer at its board, let there be plenty of imaginative literature, and let its range be not too narrow to stretch from Dante to the elder Dumas. The world of the imagination is not the world of abstraction and nonentity, as some conceive, but a world formed out of chaos by a sense of the beauty that is in man and the earth on which he dwells. It is the realm of Might-be, our haven of refuge from the shortcomings and disillusion of life. It is, to quote Spenser, who knew it well —

“The world’s sweet inn from care and wearisome turmoil.”

Do we believe, then, that God gave us in mockery this splendid faculty of sympathy with things that are a joy forever? For my part, I believe that the love and study of works of imagination is of practical utility in a country so profoundly material (or, as we like to call it, practical) in its leading tendencies as ours. The hunger after purely intellectual delights, the content with ideal possessions, cannot but be good for us in maintaining a whole-

some balance of the character and of the faculties. I for one shall never be persuaded that Shakespeare left a less useful legacy to his countrymen than Watt. We hold all the deepest, all the highest satisfactions of life as tenants of imagination. Nature will keep up the supply of what are called hard-headed people without our help, and, if it come to that, there are other as good uses for heads as at the end of battering rams.

I know that there are many excellent people who object to the reading of novels as a waste of time, if not as otherwise harmful. But I think they are trying to outwit nature, who is sure to prove cunninger than they. Look at children. One boy shall want a chest of tools, and one a book, and of those who want books one shall ask for a botany, another for a romance. They will be sure to get what they want, and we are doing a grave wrong to their morals by driving them to do things on the sly, to steal that food which their constitution craves and which is wholesome for them, instead of having it freely and frankly given them as the wisest possible diet. If we cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, so neither can we hope to succeed with the opposite experiment. But we may spoil the silk for its legitimate uses. I can conceive of no healthier reading for a boy, or girl either, than Scott's novels, or Cooper's, to speak only of the dead. I have found them very good reading at least for one young man, for one middle-aged man, and for one who is growing old. No, no — banish the Antiquary, banish

Leather Stocking, and banish all the world! Let us not go about to make life duller than it is.

But I must shut the doors of my imaginary library or I shall never end. It is left for me to say a few words of cordial acknowledgment to Mr. Fitz for his judicious and generous gift. I have great pleasure in believing that the custom of giving away money during their lifetime (and there is nothing harder for most men to part with, except prejudice) is more common with Americans than with any other people. It is a still greater pleasure to see that the favorite direction of their beneficence is towards the founding of colleges and libraries. My observation has led me to believe that there is no country in which wealth is so sensible of its obligations as our own. And, as most of our rich men have risen from the ranks, may we not fairly attribute this sympathy with their kind to the benign influence of democracy rightly understood? My dear and honored friend, George William Curtis, told me that he was sitting in front of the late Mr. Ezra Cornell in a convention, where one of the speakers made a Latin quotation. Mr. Cornell leaned forward and asked for a translation of it, which Mr. Curtis gave him. Mr. Cornell thanked him, and added, "If I can help it, no young man shall grow up in New York hereafter without the chance, at least, of knowing what a Latin quotation means when he hears it." This was the germ of Cornell University, and it found food for its roots in that sympathy and thoughtfulness for others of which I just

spoke. This is the healthy side of that good nature which democracy tends to foster, and which is so often harmful when it has its root in indolence or indifference; especially harmful where our public affairs are concerned, and where it is easiest, because there we are giving away what belongs to other people. It should be said, however, that in this country it is as laudably easy to procure signatures to a subscription paper as it is shamefully so to obtain them for certificates of character and recommendations to office. And is not this public spirit a national evolution from that frame of mind in which New England was colonized, and which found expression in these grave words of Robinson and Brewster: "We are knit together as a body in a most strict and sacred bond and covenant of the Lord, of the violation of which we make great conscience, and by virtue whereof we hold ourselves strictly tied to all care of each other's good, and of the whole." Let us never forget the deep and solemn import of these words. The problem before us is to make a whole of our many discordant parts, our many foreign elements, and I know of no way in which this can better be done than by providing a common system of education and a common door of access to the best books by which that education may be continued, broadened, and made fruitful. For it is certain that, whatever we do or leave undone, those discordant parts and foreign elements are to be, whether we will or no, members of that body which Robinson and Brewster had in mind, bone of our bone, and flesh of our

flesh, for good or ill. I am happy in believing that democracy has enough vigor of constitution to assimilate these seemingly indigestible morsels and transmute them into strength of muscle and symmetry of limb.

There is no way in which a man can build so secure and lasting a monument for himself as in a public library. Upon that he may confidently allow "Resurgam" to be carved, for, through his good deed, he will rise again in the grateful remembrance and in the lifted and broadened minds and fortified characters of generation after generation. The pyramids may forget their builders, but memorials such as this have longer memories.

Mr. Fitz has done his part in providing your library with a dwelling. It will be for the citizens of Chelsea to provide it with worthy habitants. So shall they, too, have a share in the noble eulogy of the ancient wise man: "The teachers shall shine as the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever."

WORDSWORTH

ADDRESS AS PRESIDENT OF THE WORDSWORTH SOCIETY,
10 MAY, 1884.

IN an early volume of the "Philosophical Transactions" there is a paper concerning "A certain kind of Lead found in Germany proper for Essays." That it may have been first found in Germany I shall not question, but deposits of this depressing mineral have been discovered since in other countries also, and we are all of us more or less familiar with its presence in the essay, — nowhere more than when this takes the shape of a critical dissertation on some favorite poet. Is this, then, what poets are good for, that we may darken them with our elucidations, or bury them out of sight under the gathering silt of our comments? Must we, then, peep and botanize on the rose of dawn or the passion-flower of sunset? I should rather take the counsel of a great poet, the commentaries on whom already make a library in themselves, and say, —

"State contenti, umana gente, al *quia*,"

be satisfied if poetry be delightful, or helpful, or inspiring, or all these together, but do not consider too nicely why it is so.

I would not have you suppose that I am glancing covertly at what others, from Coleridge down, have written of Wordsworth. I have read them, including a recent very suggestive contribution of Mr. Swinburne, with no other sense of dissatisfaction than that which springs from "desiring this man's art and that man's scope." No, I am thinking only that whatever can be profitably or unprofitably said of him has been already said, and that what is said for the mere sake of saying it is not worth saying at all. Moreover, I myself have said of him what I thought good more than twenty years ago.¹ It is as wearisome to repeat one's self as it is profitless to repeat others, and that we have said something, however inadequate it may afterwards seem to us, is a great hindrance to saying anything better.

The only function that a president of the Wordsworth Society is called on to perform is that of bidding it farewell at the end of his year, and it is perhaps fortunate that I have not had the leisure to prepare a discourse so deliberate as to be more worthy of the occasion. Without unbroken time there can be no consecutive thought, and it is my misfortune that in the midst of a reflection or of a sentence I am liable to be called away by the bell of private or public duty. Even had I been able to prepare something that might have satisfied me better, I should still be at the disadvantage of following next after a retiring president² who always

¹ *Literary Essays*, iv. 354.

² Mr. Matthew Arnold.

has the art of saying what all of us would be glad to say if we could, and who in his address last year gave us what seemed to me the finished model of what such a performance should be.

During the year that has passed since our last Annual Meeting, however idle the rest of us may have been, our secretary has been fruitfully busy, and has given us two more volumes of what it is safe to say will be the standard and definitive edition of the poet's works. In this, the chronological arrangement of the several poems, and still more the record in the margin of the author's corrections or repentances (*pentimenti*, as the Italians prettily call them), furnish us with a kind of self-registering instrument of the exactest kind by which to note, if not always the growth of his mind, yet certainly the gradual clarification of his taste, and the somewhat toilsome education of his ear. It is plain that with Wordsworth, more than with most poets, poetry was an art, — an art, too, rather painfully acquired by one who was endowed by nature with more of the vision than of the faculty divine. Some of the more important omissions, especially, seem silently to indicate changes of opinion, though oftener, it may be suspected, of mood, or merely a shifting of the point of view, the natural consequence of a change for the better in his own material condition.

One result of this marshalling of the poems by the natural sequence of date is the conviction that, whatever modifications Wordsworth's ideas concerning certain social and political questions may

have undergone, these modifications had not their origin in inconsiderate choice, or in any seduction of personal motive, but were the natural and unconscious outcome of enlarged experience, and of more profound reflection upon it. I see no reason to think that he ever swerved from his early faith in the beneficence of freedom, but rather that he learned the necessity of defining more exactly in what freedom consisted, and the conditions, whether of time or place, under which alone it can be beneficent, of insisting that it must be an evolution and not a manufacture, and that it should coördinate itself with the prior claims of society and civilization. The process in his mind was the ordinary crystallization of sentiment hitherto swimming in vague solution, and now precipitated in principles. He had made the inevitable discovery that comes with years, of how much harder it is to do than to see what 't were good to do, and grew content to build the poor man's cottage, since the means did not exist of building the prince's palace he had dreamed. It is noticeable how many of his earlier poems turn upon the sufferings of the poor from the injustice of man or the unnatural organization of society. He himself had been the victim of an abuse of the power that rank and wealth sometimes put into the hands of unworthy men, and had believed in political methods, both for remedy and prevention. He had believed also in the possibility of a gregarious regeneration of man by sudden and sharp, if need were by revolutionary expedients, like those impromptu conversions of

the inhabitants of a city from Christ to Mahomet, or back again, according to the creed of their conqueror, of which we read in mediæval romances. He had fancied that the laws of the universe would curtsy to the resolves of the National Convention. He had seen this hope utterly baffled and confuted, as it seemed, by events in France, by events that had occurred, too, in the logical sequence foretold by students of history. He had been convinced, perhaps against his will, that a great part of human suffering has its root in the nature of man, and not in that of his institutions. Where was the remedy to be found, if remedy indeed there were? It was to be sought at least only in an improvement wrought by those moral influences that build up and buttress the personal character. Goethe taught the self-culture that results in self-possession, in breadth and impartiality of view, and in equipoise of mind; Wordsworth inculcated that self-development through intercourse with man and nature which leads to self-sufficingness, self-sustainment, and equilibrium of character. It was the individual that should and could be leavened, and through the individual the lump. To reverse the process was to break the continuity of history and to wrestle with the angel of destiny.

And for one of the most powerfully effective of the influences for which he was seeking, where should he look if not to Religion? The sublimities and amenities of outward nature might suffice for William Wordsworth, might for him have almost filled the place of a liberal education; but they

elevate, teach, and above all console the imaginative and solitary only, and suffice to him who already suffices to himself. The thought of a god vaguely and vaporously dispersed throughout the visible creation, the conjecture of an animating principle that gives to the sunset its splendors, its passion to the storm, to cloud and wind their sympathy of form and movement, that sustains the faith of the crag in its forlorn endurance, and of the harebell in the slender security of its stem, may inspire or soothe, console or fortify, the man whose physical and mental fibre is so sensitive that, like the spectroscope, it can both feel and record these impalpable impulses and impressions, these impersonal vibrations of identity between the fragmentary life that is in himself and the larger life of the universe whereof he is a particle. Such supersensual emotions might help to make a poem, but they would not make a man, still more a social being. Absorption in the whole would not tend to that development of the individual which was the corner-stone of Wordsworth's edifice.

That instinct in man which leads him to fashion a god in his own image, why may it not be an instinct as natural and wholesome as any other? And it is not only God that this instinct embodies and personifies, but every profounder abstract conception, every less selfish devotion of which man is capable. Was it, think you, of a tiny crooked outline on the map, of so many square miles of earth, or of Hume and Smollett's History that Nelson was thinking when he dictated what are perhaps

the most inspiring words ever uttered by an Englishman to Englishmen? Surely it was something in woman's shape that rose before him with all the potent charm of noble impulsion that is hers as much through her weakness as her strength. And the features of that divine apparition, had they not been painted in every attitude of their changeful beauty by Romney?

Coarse and rudimentary as this instinct is in the savage, it is sublimed and etherealized in the profoundly spiritual imagination of Dante, which yet is forced to admit the legitimacy of its operation. Beatrice tells him —

“Thus to your minds it needful is to speak,
Because through sense alone they understand :
It is for this that Scripture condescends
Unto your faculties, and feet and hands
To God attributes, meaning something else.”

And in what I think to be the sublimest reach to which poetry has risen, the conclusion of the “Paradiso,” Dante tells us that within the three whirling rings of vari-colored light that symbolize the wisdom, the power, and the love of God, he seems to see the image of man.

Wordsworth would appear to have been convinced that this Something deeply interfused, this pervading but illusive intimation, of which he was dimly conscious, and that only by flashes, could never serve the ordinary man, who was in no way and at no time conscious of it, as motive, as judge, and more than all as consoler, — could never fill the place of the Good Shepherd. Observation con-

vinced him that what are called the safeguards of society are the staff also of the individual members of it; that tradition, habitude, and heredity are great forces, whether for impulse or restraint. He had pondered a pregnant phrase of the poet Daniel, where he calls religion "mother of Form and Fear." A growing conviction of its profound truth turned his mind towards the Church as the embodiment of the most potent of all traditions, and to her public offices as the expression of the most socially humanizing of all habitudes. It was no empty formalism that could have satisfied his conception, but rather that "Ideal Form, the universal mould," that *forma mentis æterna* which has given shape and expression to the fears and hopes and aspirations of mankind. And what he understood by Fear is perhaps shadowed forth in the "Ode to Duty," in which he speaks to us out of an ampler ether than in any other of his poems, and which may safely "challenge insolent Greece and haughty Rome" for a comparison either in kind or degree.

I ought not to detain you longer from the interesting papers, the reading of which has been promised for this meeting. No member of this Society would admit that its existence was needed to keep alive an interest in the poet, or to promote the study of his works. But I think we should all consent that there could be no better reason for its being than the fact that it elicits an utterance of the impression made by his poetry on many different minds looking at him from as many different points of view. That he should have a special

meaning for every one in an audience so various in temperament and character might well induce us to credit him with a wider range of sympathies and greater breadth of thought than each of us separately would, perhaps, be ready to admit.

But though reluctant to occupy more than my fair share of your time, the occasion tempts me irresistibly to add a few more words of general criticism. It has seemed to me that Wordsworth has too commonly been estimated rather as philosopher or teacher than as poet. The value of what he said has had more influence with the jury than the way in which he said it. There are various methods of criticism, but I think we should all agree that literary work is to be judged from the purely literary point of view.

If it be one of the baser consolations, it is also one of the most disheartening concomitants of long life, that we get used to everything. Two things, perhaps, retain their freshness more perdurably than the rest, — the return of spring, and the more poignant utterances of the poets. And here, I think, Wordsworth holds his own with the best. But Mr. Arnold's volume of selections from him suggests a question of some interest, for the Wordsworth Society of special interest, — How much of his poetry is likely to be a permanent possession? The answer to this question is involved in the answer to a question of wider bearing, — What are the conditions of permanence? Immediate or contemporaneous recognition is certainly not dominant among them, or Cowley would still be popular, —

Cowley, to whom the Muse gave every gift but one, the gift of the unexpected and inevitable word. Nor can mere originality assure the interest of posterity, else why are Chaucer and Gray familiar, while Donne, one of the subtlest and most self-irradiating minds that ever sought an outlet in verse, is known only to the few? Since Virgil there have been at most but four cosmopolitan authors, — Dante, Cervantes, Shakespeare, and Goethe. These have stood the supreme test of being translated into all tongues, because the large humanity of their theme, and of their handling of it, needed translation into none. Calderon is a greater poet than Goethe, but even in the most masterly translation he retains still a Spanish accent, and is accordingly *interned* (if I may Anglicize a French word) in that provincialism which we call nationality.

When one reads what has been written about Wordsworth, one cannot fail to be struck by the predominance of the personal equation in the estimate of his value, and when we consider his claim to universal recognition, it would not be wise to overlook the rare quality of the minds that he has most attracted and influenced. If the character of the constituency may be taken as the measure of the representative, there can be no doubt that, by his privilege of interesting the highest and purest order of intellect, Wordsworth must be set apart from the other poets, his contemporaries, if not above them. And yet we must qualify this praise by the admission that he continues to be insular;

that he makes no conquests beyond the boundaries of his mother-tongue ; that, more than perhaps any other poet of equal endowment, he is great and surprising in passages and ejaculations. In these he truly

“ Is happy as a lover, and attired

In sudden brightness, like a man inspired ; ”

in these he loses himself, as Sir Thomas Browne would say, in an *O, altitudo*, where his muse is indeed a muse of fire, that can ascend, if not to the highest heaven of invention, yet to the supremest height of impersonal utterance. Then, like Elias the prophet, “ he stands up as fire, and his word burns like a lamp.” But too often, when left to his own resources, and to the conscientious performance of the duty laid upon him to be a great poet *quand même*, he seems diligently intent on producing fire by the primitive method of rubbing the dry sticks of his blank verse one against the other, while we stand in shivering expectation of the flame that never comes. In his truly inspired and inspiring passages it is remarkable also that he is most unlike his ordinary self, least in accordance with his own theories of the nature of poetic expression. When at his best, he startles and waylays as only genius can, but is furthest from that equanimity of conscious and constantly indwelling power that is the characteristic note of the greatest work. If Wordsworth be judged by the *ex ungue leonem* standard, by passages, or by a dozen single poems, no one capable of forming an opinion would hesitate to pronounce him, not

only a great poet, but among the greatest, convinced in the one case by the style, and in both by the force that radiates from him, by the stimulus he sends kindling through every fibre of the intellect and of the imagination. At the same time there is no admittedly great poet in placing whom we are forced to acknowledge so many limitations and to make so many concessions.

Even as a teacher he is often too much of a pedagogue, and is apt to forget that poetry instructs not by precept and inculcation, but by hints and indirections and suggestions, by inducing a mood rather than by enforcing a principle or a moral. He sometimes impresses our fancy with the image of a schoolmaster whose class-room commands an unrivalled prospect of cloud and mountain, of all the pomp and prodigality of heaven and earth. From time to time he calls his pupils to the window, and makes them see what, without the finer intuition of his eyes, they had never seen; makes them feel what, without the sympathy of his more penetrating sentiment, they had never felt. It seems the revelation of a new heaven and a new earth, and to contain in itself its own justification. Then suddenly recollecting his duty, he shuts the window, calls them back to their tasks, and is equally well pleased and more discursive in enforcing on them the truth that the moral of all this is that in order to be happy they must be virtuous. If the total absence of any sense of humor had the advantage sometimes of making Wordsworth sublimely unconscious, it quite as often made him so to his loss.

In his noblest utterances man is absent except as the antithesis that gives a sharper emphasis to nature. The greatest poets, I think, have found man more interesting than nature, have considered nature as no more than the necessary scenery, artistically harmful if too pompous or obtrusive, before which man acts his tragi-comedy of life. This peculiarity of Wordsworth results naturally from the fact that he had no dramatic power, and of narrative power next to none. If he tell us a story, it is because it gives him the chance to tell us something else, and to him of more importance. In Scott's narrative poems the scenery is accessory and subordinate. It is a picturesque background to his figures, a landscape through which the action rushes like a torrent, catching a hint of color perhaps from rock or tree, but never any image so distinct that it tempts us aside to reverie or meditation. With Wordsworth the personages are apt to be lost in the landscape, or kept waiting idly while the poet muses on its deeper suggestions. And he has no sense of proportion, no instinct of choice and discrimination. All his thoughts and emotions and sensations are of equal value in his eyes because they are his, and he gives us methodically and conscientiously all he can, and not that only which he cannot help giving because it must and will be said. One might apply to him what Miss Skeggs said of Dr. Burdock, that "he seldom leaves anything out, as he writes only for his own amusement." There is no limit to his — let us call it *facundity*. He was dimly conscious of this, and

turned by a kind of instinct, I suspect, to the sonnet, because its form forced boundaries upon him, and put him under bonds to hold his peace at the end of the fourteenth line. Yet even here nature would out, and the oft-recurring *same subject continued* lures the nun from her cell to the convent parlor, and tempts the student to make a pulpit of his pensive citadel. The hour-glass is there, to be sure, with its lapsing admonition, but it reminds the preacher only that it can be turned.

I have said that Wordsworth was insular, but, more than this, there is also something local, I might say parochial, in his choice of subject and tone of thought. I am not sure that what is called philosophical poetry ever appeals to more than a very limited circle of minds, though to them it appeals with an intimate power that makes them fanatical in their preference. Perhaps none of those whom I have called universal poets (unless it be Dante) calls out this fanaticism, for they do not need it, fanaticism being a sure token either of weakness in numbers or of weakness in argument. The greatest poets interest the passions of men no less than their intelligence, and are more concerned with the secondary than the primal sympathies, with the concrete than with the abstract.

But I have played the *advocatus diaboli* long enough. I come back to the main question from which I set out. Will Wordsworth survive, as Lucretius survives, through the splendor of certain sunbursts of imagination refusing for a passionate moment to be subdued by the unwilling material

in which it is forced to work, while that material takes fire in the working as it can and will only in the hands of genius, as it cannot and will not, for example, in the hands of Dr. Akenside? Is he to be known a century hence as the author of remarkable passages? Certainly a great part of him will perish, not, as Ben Jonson said of Donne, for want of understanding, but because too easily understood. His teaching, whatever it was, is part of the air we breathe, and has lost that charm of exclusion and privilege that kindled and kept alive the zeal of his acolytes while it was still sectarian, or even heretical. But he has that surest safeguard against oblivion, that imperishable incentive to curiosity and interest that belongs to all original minds. His finest utterances do not merely nestle in the ear by virtue of their music, but in the soul and life, by virtue of their meaning. One would be slow to say that his general outfit as poet was so complete as that of Dryden, but that he habitually dwelt in a diviner air, and alone of modern poets renewed and justified the earlier faith that made poet and prophet interchangeable terms. Surely he was not an artist in the strictest sense of the word; neither was Isaiah; but he had a rarer gift, the capability of being greatly inspired. Popular, let us admit, he can never be; but as in Catholic countries men go for a time into retreat from the importunate dissonances of life to collect their better selves again by communion with things that are heavenly, and therefore eternal, so this Chartreuse of Wordsworth, dedicated to the Genius of Soli-

tude, will allure to its imperturbable calm the finer natures and the more highly tempered intellects of every generation, so long as man has any intuition of what is most sacred in his own emotions and sympathies, or of whatever in outward nature is most capable of awakening them and making them operative, whether to console or strengthen. And over the entrance-gate to that purifying seclusion shall be inscribed, —

“Minds innocent and quiet take
This for an hermitage.”

DON QUIXOTE

NOTES READ AT THE WORKINGMEN'S COLLEGE, GREAT
ORMOND STREET, LONDON.

IN every literature which can be in any sense called national there is a flavor of the soil from which it sprang, in which it grew, and from which its roots drew nourishment. This flavor, at first, perhaps, the cause of distaste, gives a peculiar relish when we have once learned to like it. It is a limitation, no doubt, and when artificially communicated, or in excess, incurs the reproach of provincialism, just as there are certain national dishes that are repugnant to every foreign palate. But it has the advantage of giving even to second-class writers in a foreign language that strangeness which in our own tongue is possible only to originality either of thought or style. When this savor of nationality is combined with original genius, as in such a writer as Calderon, for example, the charm is incalculably heightened.

Spanish literature, if it have nothing that for height and depth can be compared with the "*Divina Commedia*" of Dante (as indeed what other modern literature has?), is rich in works that will repay study, and evolved itself by natural processes out of the native genius, the history, and the min-

gled races of the country more evidently, perhaps, than that of any other modern people. It was of course more or less modified from time to time by foreign, especially by French, influences in its earlier period, by Italian in the sixteenth century, and in later times again by French and German influences more or less plainly marked, but through all and in spite of all, by virtue of the vigor of its native impulse, it has given an essentially Spanish character to all its productions. Its earliest monument, the "Song of the Cid," is in form a reproduction of the French "*Chanson de Geste*," a song of action or of what has been acted, but the spirit which animates it is very different from that which animates the "Song of Roland," its nearest French parallel in subject and form. The Spanish Romances, very much misrepresented in the spirited and facile reproductions of Lockhart, are beyond question the most original and fascinating popular poetry of which we know anything. Their influence upon the form of Heine's verse is unmistakable. In the Drama, also, Spain has been especially abundant and inventive. She has supplied all Europe with plots, and has produced at least one dramatist who takes natural rank with the greatest in any language by his depth of imagination and fertility of resource. For fascination of style and profound suggestion, it would be hard to name another author superior to Calderon, if indeed equal to him. His charm was equally felt by two minds as unlike each other as those of Goethe and Shelley. These in themselves are sufficient achieve-

DOMINICAN SISTERS



ments, and the intellectual life of a nation could maintain itself on the unearned increment of these without further addition to its resources. But Spain has also had the good fortune to produce one book which by the happiness of its conception, by the variety of its invention, and the charm of its style, has been adopted into the literature of mankind, and has occupied a place in their affection to which few other books have been admitted.

We have no word in English so comprehensive as the *Dichtung* of the Germans, which includes every exercise of the creative faculty, whether in the line of pathos or humor, whether in the higher region of imagination or on the lower levels of fancy where the average man draws easier breath. It is about a work whose scene lies on this inferior plane, but whose vividness of intuition and breadth of treatment rank it among the highest achievements of imaginative literature, that I shall say a few words this evening, and I trust that I shall see nothing in it that in the author's intention, at least, is not honestly to be found there; certainly that I shall not pretend to see anything which others have professed to discover there, but to which nature has made me color-blind.

I ask your attention not to an essay on "Don Quixote," still less to an essay on Cervantes, but rather to a few illustrative comments on his one immortal book (drawn almost wholly from notes written on its margin in repeated readings), which may tend to throw a stronger light on what I shall not scruple to call its incomparable originality both

as a conception and a study of character. It is one of the few books that can lay undisputed claim to the distinction of being universal and cosmopolitan, equally at home in all languages and welcome to all kindreds and conditions of men; a *human* book in the fullest sense of the word; a kindly book, whether we take that adjective in its original meaning of *natural*, or in its present acceptation, which would seem to imply that at some time or other, not too precisely specified in history, to be kindly and to be natural had been equivalent terms. I can think of no book so thoroughly good-natured and good-humored; and this is the more remarkable because it shows that the optimism of its author had survived more misfortune and disenchantment than have fallen to the lot of many men, even the least successful. I suspect that Cervantes, with his varied experience, maimed at the battle of Lepanto, a captive in Algiers, pinched with poverty all his life, and writing his great book in a debtor's prison, might have formed as just an estimate of the vanity of vanities as the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes. But the notion of *Weltschmerz*, or the misery of living and acting in this beautiful world, seems never to have occurred to him, or, if it did, never to have embittered him. Had anybody suggested the thought to him, he would probably have answered, "Well, perhaps it is not the best of all possible worlds, but it is the best we have, or are likely to get in *my* time. Had I been present at its creation, I might, perhaps, as Alfonso the Learned thought *he*

might, have given some useful advice for its improvement, and, were I consulted even now, could suggest some amendments in my own condition therein. But after all, it is not a bad world, as worlds go, and the wisest plan, if the luck go against us, is to follow the advice of Durandarte in the Cave of Montesinos, 'Patience, and shuffle the cards.' A new deal may give us better hands." His sense of humor kept his nature sweet and fresh, and made him capable of seeing that there are two sides to every question, even to a question in which his own personal interest was directly involved. In his dedication of the Second Part of "Don Quixote" to the Conde de Lemos, written in old age and infirmity, he smiles cheerfully on Poverty as on an old friend and lifelong companion. St. Francis could not have looked with more benignity on her whom he chose, as Dante tells us, for his bride.

I have called "Don Quixote" a cosmopolitan book, and I know of none other that can compete with it in this respect unless it be "Robinson Crusoe." But "Don Quixote," if less verisimilar as a narrative, and I am not sure that it is, appeals to far higher qualities of mind and demands a far subtler sense of appreciation than the masterpiece of Defoe. If the latter represent in simplest prose what interests us because it *might* happen to any man, the other, while seeming never to leave the low level of fact and possibility, constantly suggests the loftier region of symbol, and sets before us that eternal contrast between the ideal and the

real, between the world as it might be and the world as it is, between the fervid completeness of conception and the chill inadequacy of fulfilment, which life sooner or later, directly or indirectly, forces upon the consciousness of every man who is more than a patent digester. There is a moral in "Don Quixote," and a very profound one, whether Cervantes consciously put it there or not, and it is this: that whoever quarrels with the Nature of Things, wittingly or unwittingly, is certain to get the worst of it. The great difficulty lies in finding out what the Nature of Things really and perdurably is, and the great wisdom, after we have made this discovery, or persuaded ourselves that we have made it, is in accommodating our lives and actions to it as best we may or can. And yet, though all this be true, there is another and deeper moral in the book than this. The pathos which underlies its seemingly farcical turmoil,¹ the tears which sometimes tremble under our lids after its most poignant touches of humor, the sympathy with its hero which survives all his most ludicrous defeats and humiliations and is only deepened by them, the feeling that he is after all the one noble and heroic figure in a world incapable of comprehending him,

¹ I can think of no better instance to show how thin is the partition that divides humor from pathos than the lustration of the two vulgar Laises (*distraídas mozas*) by the pure imagination of Don Quixote (*Part. Prim. cap. ii.*). The sentiment is more natural and truer than that which Victor Hugo puts into the mouth of Marion Delorme when she tells her lover that "his love has given her back her maidenhood." To *him* it might, but it would rather have reproached her with the loss of it.

and to whose inhabitants he is distorted and caricatured by the crooked panes in those windows of custom and convention through which they see him, all this seems to hint that only he who has the imagination to conceive and the courage to attempt a trial of strength with what foists itself

on our senses as the Order of Nature for the time being, can achieve great results or kindle the co-operative and efficient enthusiasm of his fellowmen. The Don Quixote of one generation may live to hear himself called the savior of society by the next. How exalted was Don Quixote's own conception of his mission is clear from what is said of his first sight of the inn,¹ that "it was as if he had seen a star which guided him not to the portals, but to the fortress of his redemption," where the allusion were too daring were he not persuaded that he is going forth to redeem the world. Cervantes, of course, is not so much speaking in his own person, as telling what passed in the mind of his hero. But he would not have ventured such an allusion in jest.

Am I forcing upon Cervantes a meaning alien to the purpose of his story and anachronistic to the age in which he lived? I do not think so, and if I err I do so in good company. I admit that there is a kind of what is called constructive criticism, which is sometimes pushed so far beyond its proper limits as to deserve rather the name of destructive, as sometimes, in the so-called restoration of an ancient building, the materials of the original architect are used in the erection of a new edifice of which he

¹ Part. Prim. cap. iii.

had never dreamed, or, if he had dreamed of it, would have fancied himself the victim of some horrible nightmare. I would not willingly lay myself open to the imputation of applying this method to Cervantes, and attribute to him a depth of intention which, could he be asked about it, would call up in his eyes the meditative smile that must habitually have flickered there. Spaniards have not been wanting who protested against what they consider to be the German fashion of interpreting their national author. Don Juan Valera, in particular, one of the best of contemporary Spanish men of letters, both as critic and novelist, has argued the negative side of the question with force and acumen in a discourse pronounced on his admission to the Spanish Academy. But I must confess that, while he interested, he did not convince me. I could quite understand his impatience at what he considered the supersubtleties of interpretation to which our Teutonic cousins, who have taught us so much, are certainly somewhat prone. We have felt it ourselves when the obvious meaning of Shakespeare has been rewritten into Hegelese, by some Doctor of Philosophy desperate with the task of saying something when everything had been already said, and eager to apply his new theory of fog as an illuminating medium. But I do not think that transcendental criticism can be charged with indiscretion in the case of "Don Quixote." After reading all that can be said against the justice of its deductions, or divinations if you choose to call them so, I am inclined to say, as Turner did to the

lady who, after looking at one of his pictures, declared that she could not see all this in nature, "Madam, don't you wish to heaven you could?" I believe that in all really great imaginative work we are aware, as in nature, of something far more deeply interfused with our consciousness, underlying the obvious and familiar, as the living spirit of them, and accessible only to a heightened sense and a more passionate sympathy. He reads most wisely who thinks everything into a book that it is capable of holding, and it is the stamp and token of a great book so to incorporate itself with our own being, so to quicken our insight and stimulate our thought, as to make us feel as if we helped to create it while we read. Whatever we can find in a book that aids us in the conduct of life, or to a truer interpretation of it, or to a franker reconciliation with it, we may with a good conscience believe is not there by accident, but that the author meant that we should find it there. Cervantes certainly intended something of far wider scope than a mere parody on the Romances of Chivalry, which before his day had ceased to have any vitality as motives of human conduct, or even as pictures of a life that anybody believed to have ever existed except in dreamland. That he *did* intend his book as a good-humored criticism on *doctrinaire* reformers who insist, in spite of all history and experience, on believing that society is a device of human wit or an imposture of human cunning, and not a growth, an evolution from natural causes, is clear enough in more than one pas-

sage to the thoughtful reader. It is also a satire on all attempts to remake the world by the means and methods of the past, and on the humanity of impulse which looks on each fact that rouses its pity or its sense of wrong as if it was or could be complete in itself, and were not indissolubly bound up with myriads of other facts both in the past and the present. When we say that we are all of us the result of the entire past, we perhaps are not paying the past a very high compliment; but it is no less true that whatever happens is in some sense, more or less strict, the result of all that has happened before. As with all men of heated imaginations, a near object of compassion occupies the whole mind of Don Quixote; the figure of the present sufferer looms gigantic and shuts out all perception of remoter and more general considerations. Don Quixote's quarrel is with the structure of society, and it is only by degrees, through much mistake and consequent suffering, that he finds out how strong that structure is; nay, how strong it must be in order that the world may go smoothly and the course of events not be broken by a series of cataclysms. The French Revolutionists with the sincerest good intentions set about reforming in Don Quixote's style, and France has been in commotion ever since. They carefully grubbed up every root that drew its sustenance from the past, and have been finding out ever since to their sorrow that nothing with roots can be made to order. "Do right though the heavens fall" is an admirable precept so long as the heavens do not take you

at your word and come down about your ears — still worse about those of your neighbors. It is a rule rather of private than public obligation — for indeed it is the doing of right that *keeps* the heavens from falling. After Don Quixote's temporary rescue of the boy Andrés from his master's beating, the manner in which he rides off and discharges his mind of consequences is especially characteristic of reform by theory without study of circumstances. It is a profound stroke of humor that the reformer Don Quixote should caution Sancho not to attempt making the world over again, and to adapt himself to things as he finds them.

In one of his adventures, it is in perfect keeping that he should call on all the world to stop "till *he* was satisfied." It is to be noted that in both Don Quixote's attempts at the redress of particular wrong (Andrés and the galley-slaves) the objects (I might call them victims) of his benevolence come back again to his discomfiture. In the case of Andrés, Don Quixote can only blush, but Sancho (the practical man without theories) gives the poor fellow a hunch of bread and a few pennies, which are very much to the purpose. Cervantes gives us a plain hint here that all our mistakes sooner or later surely come home to roost. It is remarkable how independent of time and circumstance the satire of the great humorists always is. Aristophanes, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Molière, seem to furnish side-lights to what we read in our morning paper. As another instance of this in Cervantes, who is continually illustrating it, read the whole

scene of the liberation of the galley-slaves. How perfectly does it fit those "humanitarians" who cannot see the crime because the person of the criminal comes between them and it! That Cervantes knew perfectly well what he was about in *his* satire and saw beneath the surface of things is shown by the apparition of the police and of the landlord with the bill in his hand, for it was these that brought the Good Old Times to their forlorn *Hic Jacet*.

Coleridge, who in reach and range of intelligence, in penetration of insight, and in comprehensiveness of sympathy ranks among the first of critics, says, "Don Quixote is not a man out of his senses, but a man in whom the imagination and the pure reason are so powerful as to make him disregard the evidence of sense when it opposed their conclusions. Sancho is the common sense of the social man-animal unenlightened and unsanctified by the reason. You see how he reverences his master at the very time he is cheating him." W. S. Landor thought that Coleridge took the hint for this enlargement of the scope of the book from him, but if I remember rightly it was Bouterwek who first pointed criticism in the right direction. Down to his time "Don Quixote" had been regarded as a burlesque, a farcical satire on the Romances of Chivalry, just as Shylock was so long considered a character of low comedy.

But "Don Quixote," whatever its deeper meanings may be, has a literary importance almost without parallel, and it is time that we should con-

sider it briefly. It would be hard to find a book more purely original and without precedent. Cervantes himself says in the preface to the First Part that he knows not what book he is following in it. Indeed, he follows none, though we find traces of his having read the "Golden Ass" and the Greek Romances. It was the first time that characters had been drawn from real life with such nicety and discrimination of touch, with such minuteness in particulars, and yet with such careful elimination of whatever was unessential that the personages are idealized to a proper artistic distance from mere actuality. With all this, how perfectly life-like they are! As Don Quixote tells us that he was almost ready to say he had seen Amadis, and proceeds to describe his personal appearance minutely, so we could affirm of the Knight of La Mancha and his Squire. They are real not because they are portraits, not because they are drawn from actual personages, but rather because of their very abstraction and generalization. They are not so much taken from life as informed with it. They are conceptions, not copies from any model; creations as no other characters but those of Shakespeare are in so full and adequate a manner; developed out of a seminal idea like the creatures of nature, not the matter-of-fact work of a detective's watchfulness, products of a quick eye and a faithful memory, but the true children of the imaginative faculty from which all the dregs of observation and memory have been distilled away, leaving only what is elementary and universal. I

confess that in the productions of what is called the realistic school I too often find myself in company that is little to my taste, dragged back into a commonplace world from which I was only too glad to escape, and set to grind in the prison-house of the Philistines. I walk about in a nightmare, the supreme horror of which is that my coat is all buttonholes for bores to thrust their fingers through and bait me to their heart's content. Give me the writers who take me for a while out of myself and (with pardon be it spoken) away from my neighbors! I do not ask that characters should be real; I need but go into the street to find such in abundance. I ask only that they should be possible, that they should be typical, because these I find in myself, and with these can sympathize. Hector and Achilles, Clytemnestra and Antigone, Roland and Oliver, Macbeth and Lear, move about, if not in worlds not realized, at least in worlds not realized to any eye but that of imagination, a world far from the police reports, a world into which it is a privilege, I might almost call it an achievement, to enter. Don Quixote and his Squire are inhabitants of this world, in spite of the prosaic and often vulgar stage on which their tragi-comedy is acted, because they are symbolical, because they represent the two great factors of human character and springs of human action—the Imagination and the Understanding. If you would convince yourself how true this is, compare them with Sir Hudibras and Ralpho—or still better with Roderick Random and Strap. There

can be no better proof that Cervantes meant to contrast the ideal with the matter of fact in the two characters than his setting side by side images of the same woman as reflected in the eyes of Sancho and of his master; in other words, as seen by common-sense and by passion.¹

I shall not trouble you with any labored analysis of humor. If you wish to know what humor is, I should say read "Don Quixote." It is the element in which the whole story lives and moves and has its being, and it wakens and flashes round the course of the narrative like a phosphorescent sea in the track of a ship. It is nowhere absent; it is nowhere obtrusive; it lightens and plays about the surface for a moment and is gone. It is everywhere by suggestion, it is nowhere with emphasis and insistence. There is infinite variety, yet always in harmony with the characters and the purpose of the fable. The impression it produces is cumulative, not sudden or startling. It is unobtrusive as the tone of good conversation. I am not speaking of the *fun* of the book, of which there is plenty, and sometimes boisterous enough, but of that deeper and more delicate quality, suggestive of remote analogies and essential incongruities, which alone deserves the name of humor.

This quality is so diffused in "Don Quixote," so thoroughly permeates every pore and fibre of the book, that it is difficult to exemplify it by citation. Take as examples the scene with the goatherds, where Don Quixote, after having amply supped,

¹ Part. Prim. cap. x., xxxi.

discourses so eloquently of that Golden Age which was happy in having nothing to eat but acorns or to drink but water; where, while insisting that Sancho should assume equality as a man, he denies it to him as Sancho, by reminding him that it is granted by one who is his natural lord and master, — there is such a difference, alas, between universal and particular Brotherhood! Take the debate of Don Quixote (already mad) as to what form of madness he should assume; the quarrel of the two madmen, Don Quixote and Cardénio, about the good fame of Queen Madásima, a purely imaginary being; the resolution of Don Quixote, when forced to renounce knight-errantry, that he will become a shepherd of the kind known to poets, thus exchanging one unreality for another. Nay, take the whole book, if you would learn what humor is, whether in its most obvious or its most subtle manifestations. The highest and most complete illustration is the principal character of the story. I do not believe that a character so absolutely perfect in conception and delineation, so psychologically true, so full of whimsical inconsistencies, all combining to produce an impression of perfect coherence, is to be found in fiction. He was a monomaniac,¹ all of whose faculties, his very senses themselves, are subjected by one overmastering prepossession, and at last conspire with it, almost against their will, in spite of daily disillusion and of the uniform testimony of facts and

¹ That Cervantes had made a study of madness is evident from the Introduction to the Second Part.

events to the contrary. The key to Don Quixote's character is given in the first chapter where he is piecing out his imperfect helmet with a new visor. He makes one of pasteboard, and then, testing it with his sword, shatters it to pieces. He proceeds to make another strengthened with strips of iron, and "without caring to make a further trial of it, commissioned and held it for the finest possible visor." Don Quixote always sees what he wishes to see, and yet always sees things as they are unless the necessities of his hallucination compel him to see them otherwise, and it is wonderful with what ingenuity he makes everything bend to those necessities. Cervantes calls him the sanest madman and the maddest reasonable man in the world. Sancho says that he was fitter to be preacher than knight-errant. He *makes* facts curtsy to his prepossessions. At the same time, with exact truth to nature, he is never perfectly convinced himself except in moments of exaltation, and when the bee in his bonnet buzzes so loudly as to prevent his hearing the voice of reason. Cervantes takes care to tell us that he was never convinced that he was really a knight-errant till his ceremonious reception at the castle of the Duke.

Sancho, on the other hand, sees everything in the dry light of common sense, except when beguiled by cupidity or under the immediate spell of his master's imagination. Grant the imagination its premises, and its logic is irresistible. Don Quixote always takes these premises for granted, and Sancho, despite his natural shrewdness, is more

than half tempted to admit them, or at any rate to run the risk of their being sound, partly out of habitual respect for his master's superior rank and knowledge, partly on the chance of the reward which his master perpetually dangled before him. This reward was that island of which Don Quixote confesses he cannot tell the name because it is not down on any map. With delightful humor, it begins as *some* island, then becomes *the* island, and then one of those islands. And how much more probable does this vagueness render the fulfilment of the promise than if Don Quixote had locked himself up in a specific *one*! A line of retreat is thus always kept open, while Sancho's eagerness is held at bay by this seemingly chance suggestion of a choice in these hypothetical lordships. This vague potentiality of islands eludes the thrust of any definite objection. And when Sancho is inclined to grumble, his master consoles him by saying, "I have already told thee, Sancho, to give thyself no care about it; for even should the island fail us, there are the kingdoms of Dinamarca and Sobradisa that would fit you as the ring fits the finger, and since they are on *terra firma*, you should rejoice the more." As if these were more easily to be come at, though all his *terra firma* was in dreamland too. It should seem that Sancho was too shrewd for such a bait, and that here at least was an exception to that probability for which I have praised the story. But I think it rather a justification of it. We must remember how near the epoch of the story was to that of the *Con-*

quistadores, when men's fancies were still glowing with the splendid potentialities of adventure. And when Don Quixote suggests the possibility of creating Sancho a marquis, it is remarkable that he mentions the title conferred upon Cortés. The conscience of Don Quixote is in loyalty to his ideal; he prizes desert as an inalienable possession of the soul. The conscience of Sancho is in the eyes of his neighbors, and he values repute for its worldly advantages. When Sancho tries to divert his master from the adventure of the Fulling Mills by arguing that it was night, and that none could see them, so that they might well turn out of the way to avoid the danger, and begs him rather to take a little sleep, Don Quixote answers indignantly: "Sleep thou, who wast born for sleep. As for me, I shall do whatever I see to be most becoming to my profession." With equal truth to nature in both cases, Sancho is represented as inclined to believe the extravagant delusions of his master because he has seen and known him all his life, while he obstinately refuses to believe that a barber's basin is the helmet of Mambrino because he sees and knows that it is a basin. Don Quixote says of him to the Duke, "He doubts everything and believes everything." Cervantes was too great an artist to make him wholly vulgar and greedy and selfish, though he makes him all these. He is witty, wise according to his lights, affectionate, and faithful. When he takes leave of his imaginary governorship he is not without a certain manly dignity that is almost pathetic.

The ingenuity of the story, the probability of its adventures, the unwearied fecundity of invention shown in devising and interlacing them, in giving variety to a single theme and to a plot so perfectly simple in its conception, are all wonderful. The narrative flows on as if unconsciously, and our fancies are floated along upon it. It is noticeable, too, in passing, what a hypæthral story it is, how much of it passes in the open air, how the sun shines, the birds sing, the brooks dance, and the leaves murmur in it. This is peculiarly touching when we recollect that it was written in prison. In the First Part Cervantes made the mistake (as he himself afterwards practically admits) of introducing unprofitable digressions, and in respect to the propriety and congruousness of the adventures which befall Don Quixote I must also make one exception. I mean the practical jokes played upon him at the Duke's castle, in which his delusion is forced upon him instead of adapting circumstances to itself or itself to circumstances, according to the necessity of the occasion. These tend to degrade him in the eyes of the reader, who resents rather than enjoys them, and feels the essential vulgarity of his tormentors through all their fine clothes. It is quite otherwise with the cheats put upon Sancho, for we feel that either he will be shrewd enough to be more than even with the framers of them, or that he is of too coarse a fibre to feel them keenly. But Don Quixote is a gentleman and a monomaniac,—qualities, the one of which renders such rudeness incongruous, and the other unfeeling. He is, more-

over, a guest. It is curious that Shakespeare makes the same mistake with Falstaff in the "Merry Wives of Windsor," and Fielding with Parson Adams, and in both cases to our discomfort. The late Mr. Edward Fitzgerald (*quis desiderio sit pudor aut modus tam cari capitis!*) preferred the Second Part to the First, and, but for these scenes, which always pain and anger me, I should agree with him. For it is plain that Cervantes became slowly conscious as he went on how rich was the vein he had hit upon, how full of various and profound suggestion were the two characters he had conceived and who together make a complete man. No doubt he at first proposed to himself a parody of the Romances of Chivalry, but his genius soon broke away from the leading-strings of a plot that denied free scope to his deeper conception of life and men.

Cervantes is the father of the modern novel, in so far as it has become a study and delineation of character instead of being a narrative seeking to interest by situation and incident. He has also more or less directly given impulse and direction to all humoristic literature since his time. We see traces of him in Molière, in Swift, and still more clearly in Sterne and Richter. Fielding assimilated and Smollett copied him. Scott was his disciple in the "Antiquary," that most delightful of his delightful novels. Irving imitated him in his "Knickerbocker," and Dickens in his "Pickwick Papers." I do not mention this as detracting from *their* originality, but only as showing the wonderful

virility of *his*. The pedigrees of books are as interesting and instructive as those of men. It is also good for us to remember that this man whose life was outwardly a failure restored to Spain the universal empire she had lost.

HARVARD ANNIVERSARY

ADDRESS DELIVERED IN SANDERS THEATRE, CAMBRIDGE, NOVEMBER 8, 1886, ON THE TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDATION OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

It seems an odd anomaly that, while respect for age and deference to its opinions have diminished and are still sensibly diminishing among us, the relish of antiquity should be more pungent and the value set upon things merely because they are old should be greater in America than anywhere else. It is merely a sentimental relish, for ours is a new country in more senses than one, and, like children when they are fancying themselves this or that, we have to play very hard in order to believe that we are old. But we like the game none the worse, and multiply our anniversaries with honest zeal, as if we increased our centuries by the number of events we could congratulate on having happened a hundred years ago. There is something of instinct in this, and it is a wholesome instinct if it serve to quicken our consciousness of the forces that are gathered by duration and continuity; if it teach us that, ride fast and far as we may, we carry the Past on our crupper, as immovably seated there as the black Care of the Roman poet. The

generations of men are braided inextricably together, and the very trick of our gait may be countless generations older than we.

I have sometimes wondered whether, as the faith of men in a future existence grew less confident, they might not be seeking some equivalent in the feeling of a retrospective duration, if not their own, at least that of their race. Yet even this continuance is trifling and ephemeral. If the tablets unearthed and deciphered by Geology have forced us to push back incalculably the birthday of man, they have in like proportion impoverished his recorded annals, making even the Platonic year but as a single grain of the sand in Time's hour-glass, and the inscriptions of Egypt and Assyria modern as yesterday's newspaper. Fancy flutters over these vague wastes like a butterfly blown out to sea, and finds no foothold. It is true that, if we may put as much faith in heredity as seems reasonable to many of us, we are all in some transcendental sense the coevals of primitive man, and Pythagoras may well have been present in Euphorbus at the siege of Troy. Had Shakespeare's thought taken this turn when he said to Time —

“Thy pyramids built up with newer might
To me are nothing novel, nothing strange;
They are but dressings of a former sight”?

But this imputed and vicarious longevity, though it may be obscurely operative in our lives and fortunes, is no valid offset for the shortness of our days, nor widens by a hair's breadth the horizon of our memories. Man and his monuments are of

yesterday, and we, however we may play with our fancies, must content ourselves with being young. If youth be a defect, it is one that we outgrow only too soon.

Mr. Ruskin said the other day that he could not live in a country that had neither castles nor cathedrals, and doubtless men of imaginative temper find not only charm but inspiration in structures which Nature has adopted as her foster-children, and on which Time has laid his hand only in benediction. It is not their antiquity, but its association with man, that endows them with such sensitizing potency. Even the landscape sometimes bewitches us by this glamour of a human past, and the green pastures and golden slopes of England are sweeter both to the outward and to the inward eye that the hand of man has immemorially cared for and caressed them. The nightingale sings with more prevailing passion in Greece than we first heard her from the thickets of a Euripidean chorus. For myself, I never felt the working of this spell so acutely as in those gray seclusions of the college quadrangles and cloisters at Oxford and Cambridge, conscious with venerable associations, and whose very stones seemed happier for being there. The chapel pavement still whispered with the blessed feet of that long procession of saints and sages and scholars and poets, who are all gone into a world of light, but whose memories seem to consecrate the soul from all ignobler companionship.

Are we to suppose that these memories were less dear and gracious to the Puritan scholars, at whose

instigation this college was founded, than to that other Puritan who sang the dim religious light, the long-drawn aisles and fretted vaults, which these memories recalled? Doubtless all these things were present to their minds, but they were ready to forego them all for the sake of that truth whereof, as Milton says of himself, they were members incorporate. The pitiful contrast which they must have felt between the carven sanctuaries of learning they had left behind and the wattled fold they were rearing here on the edge of the wilderness is to me more than tenderly — it is almost sublimely — pathetic. When I think of their unpliable strength of purpose, their fidelity to their ideal, their faith in God and in themselves, I am inclined to say with Donne that

“We are scarce our fathers’ shadows cast at noon.”

Our past is well-nigh desolate of æsthetic stimulus. We have none or next to none of these aids to the imagination, of these coigns of vantage for the tendrils of memory or affection. Not one of our older buildings is venerable, or will ever become so. Time refuses to console them. They all look as if they meant business, and nothing more. And it is precisely because this College meant business, business of the gravest import, and did that business as thoroughly as it might with no means that were not niggardly except an abundant purpose to do its best, — it is precisely for this that we have gathered here to-day. We come back hither from the experiences of a richer life, as the son who

has prospered returns to the household of his youth, to find in its very homeliness a pulse, if not of deeper, certainly of fonder, emotion than any splendor could stir. "Dear old Mother," we say, "how charming you are in your plain cap and the drab silk that has been turned again since we saw you! You were constantly forced to remind us that you could not afford to give us this and that which some other boys had, but your discipline and diet were wholesome, and you sent us forth into the world with the sound constitutions and healthy appetites that are bred of simple fare."

It is good for us to commemorate this homespun past of ours; good, in these days of a reckless and swaggering prosperity, to remind ourselves how poor our fathers were, and that we celebrate them because for themselves and their children they chose wisdom and understanding and the things that are of God rather than any other riches. This is our Founders' Day, and we are come together to do honor to them all: first, to the Commonwealth which laid our corner-stone; next, to the gentle and godly youth from whom we took our name, — himself scarce more than a name, — and with them to the countless throng of benefactors, rich and poor, who have built us up to what we are. We cannot do it better than in the familiar words: "Let us now praise famous men and our fathers that begat us. The Lord hath wrought great glory by them through his great power from the beginning. Leaders of the people by their counsels, and, by their knowledge of learning, meet for the

people ; wise and eloquent in their instructions. There be of them that have left a name behind them that their praises might be reported. And some there be which have no memorial, who are perished as though they had never been. But these were merciful men whose righteousness hath not been forgotten. With their seed shall continually remain a good inheritance. Their seed standeth fast, and their children for their sakes."

This two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of our College is not remarkable as commemorating any memorable length of days. There is hardly a country in Europe but can show us universities that were older than ours now is when ours was but a grammar-school, with Eaton as master. Bologna, Paris, Oxford, were already famous schools when Dante visited them, as I love to think he did, six hundred years ago. We are ancient, it is true, on our own continent, ancient even as compared with several German universities more renowned than we. But it is not primarily the longevity of our Alma Mater upon which we are gathered here to congratulate her and each other. Kant says somewhere that, as the records of human transactions accumulate, the memory of man will have room only for those of supreme cosmopolitical importance. Can we claim for the birthday we are keeping a significance of so wide a bearing and so long a reach? If we may not do that, we may at least affirm confidently that the event it records and emphasizes is second in real import to none that has happened in this western hemisphere.

The material growth of the colonies would have brought about their political separation from the Mother Country in the fulness of time, without that stain of blood which unhappily keeps its own memory green so long. But the founding of the first English college here was what saved New England from becoming a mere geographical expression. It did more, for it insured, and I believe was meant to insure, our intellectual independence of the Old World. That independence has been long in coming, but it will come at last; and are not the names of the chiefest of those who have hastened its coming written on the roll of Harvard College?

I think this foundation of ours a quite unexampled thing. Surely never were the bases of such a structure as this has become, and was meant to be, laid by a community of men so poor, in circumstances so unprecedented, and under what seemed such sullen and averted stars. The colony, still insignificant, was in danger of an Indian war, was in the throes of that Antinomian controversy which threatened its very existence, yet the leaders of opinion on both sides were united in the resolve that sound learning and an educated clergy should never cease from among them or their descendants in the commonwealth they were building up. In the midst of such fears and such tumults Harvard College was born, and not Marina herself had a more blustering birth or a more chiding nativity. The prevision of those men must have been as clear as their faith was steadfast. Well they knew and

had laid to heart the wise man's precept, "Take fast hold of instruction ; let her not go ; for she is thy life."

There can be little question that the action of the General Court received its impulse and direction from the clergy, men of eminent qualities and of well-deserved authority. Among the Massachusetts Bay colonists the proportion of ministers, trained at Oxford and Cambridge, was surprisingly large, and, if we may trust the evidence of contemporary secular literature, such men as Higginson, Cotton, Wilson, Norton, Shepard, Bulkley, Davenport, to mention no more, were, in learning, intelligence, and general accomplishment, far above the average parson of the country and the church from which their consciences had driven them out. The presence and influence of such men were of inestimable consequence to the fortunes of the colony. If they were narrow, it was as the Sword of Righteousness is narrow. If they had but one idea, it was as the leader of a forlorn hope has but one, and can have no other, namely, to do the duty that is laid on him, and ask no questions. Our Puritan ancestors have been misrepresented and maligned by persons without imagination enough to make themselves contemporary with, and therefore able to understand, the men whose memories they strive to blacken. That happy breed of men who, both in church and state, led our first emigration, were children of the most splendid intellectual epoch that England has ever known. They were the coevals of a generation which passed on in scarcely

diminished radiance the torch of life kindled in great Eliza's golden days. Out of the New Learning, the new ferment alike religious and national, and the New Discoveries with their suggestion of boundless possibility, the alembic of that age had distilled a potent elixir either inspiring or intoxicating, as the mind that imbibed it was strong or weak. Are we to suppose that the lips of the founders of New England alone were unwetted by a drop of that stimulating draught? — that Milton was the only Puritan that had read Shakespeare and Ben Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher? I do not believe it, whoever may. Did they flee from persecution to become themselves persecutors in turn? This means only that they would not permit their holy enterprise to be hindered or their property to be damaged even by men with the most pious intentions and as sincere, if not always so wise, as they. They would not stand any nonsense, as the phrase is, a mood of mind from which their descendants seem somewhat to have degenerated. They were no more unreasonable than the landlady of Taylor the Platonist in refusing to let him sacrifice a bull to Jupiter in her back-parlor. The New England Puritans of the second generation became narrow enough, and puppets of that formalism against which their fathers had revolted. But this was the inevitable result of that isolation which cut them off from the great currents of cosmopolitan thought and action. Communities as well as men have a right to be judged by their best. We are justified in taking the elder

Winthrop as a type of the leading emigrants, and the more we know him the more we learn to reverence his great qualities, whether of mind or character. The posterity of those earnest and single-minded men may have thrown the creed of their fathers into the waste-basket, but their fidelity to it and to the duties they believed it to involve is the most precious and potent drop in their transmitted blood. It is especially noteworthy that they did not make a strait-waistcoat of this creed for their new college. The more I meditate upon them, the more I am inclined to pardon the enthusiasm of our old preacher when he said that God had sifted three kingdoms to plant New England.¹

The Massachusetts Bay Colony itself also was then and since without a parallel. It was established by a commercial company, whose members combined in themselves the two by no means incongruous elements of religious enthusiasm and business sagacity, the earthy ingredient, as in dynamite, holding in check its explosive partner, which yet could and did explode on sufficient concussion. They meant that their venture should be gainful, but at the same time believed that nothing could be long profitable for the body wherein the soul found not also her advantage. They feared God,

¹ Writing in the country, with almost no books about me, I have been obliged to trust wholly to my memory in my references. My friend Dr. Charles Deane, the most learned of our historical antiquarians, kindly informs me that the passage alluded to in the text should read, "God sifted a whole Nation that he might send choice Grain out into this Wilderness." Stoughton's Election Sermon, preached in 1668.

and kept their powder dry because they feared Him and meant that others should. I think their most remarkable characteristic was their public spirit, and in nothing did they show both that and the wise forecast that gives it its best value more clearly than when they resolved to keep the higher education of youth in their own hands and under their own eye. This they provided for in the College. Eleven years later they established their system of public schools, where reading and writing should be taught. This they did partly, no doubt, to provide feeders for the more advanced schools, and so for the College, but even more, it may safely be inferred, because they had found that the polity to which their ends, rough-hew them as they might, must be shaped, by the conditions under which they were forced to act, could be safe only in the hands of intelligent men, or, at worst, of men to whom they had given a chance to become such.

In founding the College, they had three objects: first, the teaching of the Humanities and of Hebrew, as the hieratic language; second, the training of a learned as well as godly clergy; and third, the education of the Indians, that they might serve as missionaries of a higher civilization and of a purer religion, as the necessary preliminary thereto. The third of these objects, after much effort and much tribulation, they were forced to abandon. John Winthrop, Jr., in a letter written to the Honorable Robert Boyle in 1663, gives us an interesting glimpse of a pair of these dusky catechumens. "I make bold," he says, "to send heere inclosed

a kind of rarity ; . . . It is two papers of Latin composed by two Indians now scollars in the Colledge in this country, and the writing is with their own hands. . . . Possibly as a novelty of that kind it may be acceptable, being a reall fruit of that hopefull worke y^t is begū amongst them . . . testifying thus much that I received them of those Indians out of their own hands, and had ready answers frō them in Latin to many questions that I propounded to them in y^t language, and heard them both express severall sentences in Greke also. I doubt not but those honorable *fautores Scientiarum* [the Royal Society] will gladly receive the intelligence of such *Vestigia Doctrinæ* in this wilderness amongst such a barbarous people." Alas, these *Vestigia* became only too soon *retrorsum* ! The Indians showed a far greater natural predisposition for disfurnishing the outside of other people's heads than for furnishing the insides of their own. Their own wild life must have been dear to them ; the forest beckoned just outside the College door, and the first blue-bird of spring whistled them back to the woods. They would have said to the president, with the Gypsy steward in the old play when he heard the new-come nightingale, "Oh, Sir, you hear I am called." At any rate, our College succeeded in keeping but one of these wild creatures long enough to make a graduate of him, and he thereupon vanishes into the merciful shadow of the past. His name — but, as there was only one Indian graduate, so there is only one living man who can pronounce his unconverted

name, and I leave the task to Dr. Hammond Trumbull.

I shall not attempt, even in brief, a history of the College. It has already been excellently done. A compendium of it would be mainly a list of unfamiliar names, and Coleridge has said truly that such names "are non-conductors ; they stop all interest."

The fame and usefulness of all institutions of learning depend on the greatness of those who teach in them,

" Queis arte benigna,
Et meliore luto finxit præcordia Titan,"

and great teachers are almost rarer than great poets. We can lay claim to none such (I must not speak of the living), unless it be Agassiz, whom we adopted, but we have had many devoted and some eminent. It has not been their fault if they have not pushed farther forward the boundaries of knowledge. Our professors have been compelled by the necessities of the case (as we are apt to call things which we ought to reform, but do not) to do too much work not properly theirs, and that of a kind so exacting as to consume the energy that might have been ample for higher service. They have been obliged to double the parts of professor and tutor. They have been underpaid and the balance made good to them by being overworked. During the seventeenth century we have reason to think that the College kept pretty well up to the standard of its contemporary colleges in England, so far as its poverty would allow. It seems to

have enjoyed a certain fame abroad among men who sympathized with the theology it taught, for I possess a Hebrew Accidence, dedicated some two hundred years ago to the "illustrious academy at Boston in New England," by a Dutch scholar whom I cannot help thinking a very discerning person. That the students of that day had access to a fairly good library may be inferred from Cotton Mather's "Magnalia," though he knew not how to make the best use of it, and is a very nightmare of pedantry. That the College had made New England a good market for books is proved by John Dunton's journey hither in the interests of his trade. During the eighteenth and first quarter of the nineteenth centuries, I fancy the condition of things here to have been very much what it was in the smaller English colleges of the period, if we may trust the verses which Gray addressed to the goddess Ignorance. Young men who were willing mainly to teach themselves might get something to their advantage, while the rest were put here by their parents as into a comfortable quarantine, where they could wait till the gates of life were opened to them, safe from any contagion of learning, except such as might be developed from previous infection. I am speaking of a great while ago. Men are apt, I know, in after life to lay the blame of their scholastic shortcomings at the door of their teachers. They are often wrong in this, and I am quite aware that there are some pupils who are knowledge-proof; but I gather from tradition, which I believe to be trust-

worthy, that there have been periods in the history of the College when the students might have sung with Bishop Golias : —

“Hi nos docent, sed indocti;
Hi nos docent, et nox nocti
Indicat scientiam.”

Despite all this, it is remarkable that the two first American imaginative artists, Allston in painting and Greenough in sculpture, were graduates of Harvard. A later generation is justly proud of Story.

We have a means of testing the general culture given here towards the middle of the last century in the *Gratulatio* presented by Harvard College on the accession of George III. It is not duller than such things usually are on the other side of the water, and it shows a pretty knack at tagging verses. It is noteworthy that the Greek in it, if I remember rightly, is wholly or chiefly Governor Bernard's. A few years earlier, some of the tracts in the Whitfield controversy prove that the writers had got here a thorough training in English at least. They had certainly not read their Swift in vain.

But the chief service, as it was the chief office, of the College during all those years was to maintain and hand down the traditions of how excellent a thing Learning was, even if the teaching were not always adequate by way of illustration. And yet, so far as that teaching went, it was wise in this, that it gave its pupils some tincture of letters as distinguished from mere scholarship. It aimed

to teach them the authors, that is, the few great ones, — the late Professor Popkin, whom the older of us remember, would have allowed that title only to the Greeks, — and to teach them in such a way as to enable the pupil to assimilate somewhat of their thought, sentiment, and style, rather than to master the minuter niceties of the language in which they wrote. It struck for their matter, as Montaigne advised, who would have men taught to love Virtue instead of learning to decline *virtus*. It set more store by the marrow than by the bone that encased it. It made language, as it should be, a ladder to literature, and not literature a ladder to language. Many a boy has hated, and rightly hated, Homer and Horace the pedagogues and grammarians, who would have loved Homer and Horace the poets, had he been allowed to make their acquaintance. The old method of instruction had the prime merit of enabling its pupils to conceive that there is neither ancient nor modern on the narrow shelves of what is truly literature. We owe a great debt to the Germans. No one is more indebted to them than I, but is there not danger of their misleading us in some directions into pedantry? In his preface to an Old French poem of the thirteenth century, lately published, the editor informs us sorrowfully that he had the advantage of listening only two years and a half to the lectures of Professor Gaston Paris, in which time he got no farther than through the first three vowels. At this rate, to master the whole alphabet, consonants and all, would be a task fitter for the centurial ado-

lescence of Methuselah than for our less liberal ration of years. I was glad my editor had had this advantage under so competent a master, and I am quite willing that Old French should get the benefit of such scrupulosity, but I think I see a tendency to train young men in the languages as if they were all to be editors, and not lovers of polite literature. Education, we are often told, is a drawing out of the faculties. May they not be drawn out too thin? I am not undervaluing philology or accuracy of scholarship. Both are excellent and admirable in their places. But philology is less beautiful to me than philosophy, as Milton understood the word, and mere accuracy is to Truth as a plaster-cast to the marble statue; it gives the facts, but not their meaning. If I must choose, I had rather a young man should be intimate with the genius of the Greek dramatic poets than with the metres of their choruses, though I should be glad to have him on easy terms with both.

For more than two hundred years, in its discipline and courses of study, the College followed mainly the lines traced by its founders. The influence of its first half century did more than any other, perhaps more than all others, to make New England what it is. During the one hundred and forty years preceding our War of Independence it had supplied the schools of the greater part of New England with teachers. What was even more important, it had sent to every parish in Massachusetts one man, the clergyman, with a certain amount of scholarship, a belief in culture, and generally

pretty sure to bring with him or to gather a considerable collection of books, by no means wholly theological. Simple and godly men were they, the truest modern antitypes of Chaucer's Good Parson, receiving much, sometimes all, of their scanty salary in kind, and eking it out by the drudgery of a cross-grained farm where the soil seems all backbone. If there was no regular practitioner, they practised without fee a grandmotherly sort of medicine, probably not much more harmful (*O, dura messorum ilia*) than the heroic treatment of the day. They contrived to save enough to send their sons through college, to portion their daughters, decently trained in English literature of the more serious kind, and perfect in the duties of household and dairy, and to make modest provision for the widow, if they should leave one. With all this, they gave their two sermons every Sunday of the year, and of a measure that would seem ruinously liberal to these less stalwart days, when scarce ten parsons together could lift the stones of Diomed which they hurled at Satan with the easy precision of lifelong practice. And if they turned their barrel of discourses at the end of the Horatian ninth year, which of their parishioners was the wiser for it? Their one great holiday was Commencement, which they punctually attended. They shared the many toils and the rare festivals, the joys and the sorrows, of their townsmen as bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh, for all were of one blood and of one faith. They dwelt on the same brotherly level with them as men, yet set apart from

and above them by their sacred office. Preaching the most terrible of doctrines, as most of them did, they were humane and cheerful men, and when they came down from the pulpit seemed to have been merely twisting their "cast-iron logic" of despair, as Coleridge said of Donne, "into true-love-knots." Men of authority, wise in council, independent, for their settlement was a life-tenure, they were living lessons of piety, industry, frugality, temperance, and, with the magistrates, were a recognized aristocracy. Surely never was an aristocracy so simple, so harmless, so exemplary, and so fit to rule. I remember a few lingering survivors of them in my early boyhood, relics of a serious but not sullen past, of a community for which in civic virtue, intelligence, and general efficacy I seek a parallel in vain: —

"rusticorum mascula militum
Proles . . . docta . . .
Versare glebas et severæ
Matris ad arbitrium recisos
Portare fustes."

I know too well the deductions to be made. It was a community without charm, or with a homely charm at best, and the life it led was visited by no muse even in dream. But it was the stuff out of which fortunate ancestors are made, and twenty-five years ago their sons showed in no diminished measure the qualities of the breed. In every household some brave boy was saying to his mother, as Iphigenia to hers, —

Πᾶσι γάρ μ' Ἑλλήσι κοινὸν ἔτεκες οὐχὶ σοὶ μόνῃ.

Nor were Harvard's sons the last. This hall commemorates them, but their story is written in headstones all over the land they saved.

To the teaching and example of those reverend men whom Harvard bred and then planted in every hamlet as pioneers and outposts of her doctrine, Massachusetts owes the better part of her moral and intellectual inheritance. They, too, were the progenitors of a numerous and valid race. My friend Dr. Holmes was, I believe, the first to point out how large a proportion of our men of light and leading sprang from their loins. The illustrious Chief Magistrate of the Republic, who honors us with his presence here to-day, has ancestors italicized in our printed registers, and has shown himself worthy of his pedigree.

During the present century, I believe that Harvard received and welcomed the new learning from Germany at the hands of Everett, Bancroft, and Ticknor, before it had been accepted by the more conservative universities of the Old Home. Everett's translation of Buttmann's Greek Grammar was reprinted in England, with the "Massachusetts" omitted after "Cambridge," at the end of the preface, to conceal its American origin. Emerson has told us how his intellectual life was quickened by the eloquent enthusiasm of Everett's teaching. Mr. Bancroft made strenuous efforts to introduce a more wholesome discipline and maturer methods of study, with the result of a rebellion of the Freshman Class, who issued a manifesto of their wrongs, written by the late Robert Rantoul,

which ended thus: "Shall FREEMEN bear this? FRESHMEN are freemen!" They, too, remembered Revolutionary sires. Mr. Bancroft's translation of Heeren was the first of its kind, and it is worth mention that the earliest version from the prose of Heinrich Heine into English was made here, though not by a graduate of Harvard. Ticknor also strove earnestly to enlarge the scope of the collegiate courses of study. The force of the new impulse did not last long, or produce, unless indirectly, lasting results. It was premature, the students were really school-boys, and the College was not yet capable of the larger university life. The conditions of American life, too, were such that young men looked upon scholarship neither as an end nor as a means, but simply as an accomplishment, like music or dancing, of which they were to acquire a little more or a little less, generally a little less, according to individual taste or circumstances. It has been mainly during the last twenty-five years that the College, having already the name, but by no means all the resources, of a university, has been trying to perform some, at least, of the functions which that title implies.

"Now half appears
The tawny lion, pawing to get free."

Let us, then, no longer look backwards, but forwards, as our fathers did when they laid our humble foundations in the wilderness. The motto first proposed for the College arms was, as you know, *Veritas*, written across three open books. It was a noble one, and, if the full bearing of it was under-

stood, as daring as it was noble. Perhaps it was discarded because an *open* book seemed hardly the fittest symbol for what is so hard to find, and, if ever we fancy we have found it, so hard to decipher and to translate into our own language and life. Pilate's question still murmurs in the ear of every thoughtful, and Montaigne's in that of every honest man. The motto finally substituted for that, *Christo et Ecclesiæ*, is, when rightly interpreted, substantially the same, for it means that we are to devote ourselves to the highest conception we have of Truth and to the preaching of it. Fortunately, the Sphinx proposes her conundrums to us one at a time and at intervals proportioned to our wits.

Joseph de Maistre says that "un homme d'esprit est tenu de savoir deux choses : 1°, ce qu'il est ; 2°, où il est." The questions for us are, In what sense and how far are we become a university? And then, if we fully become so, What and to what end should a university aim to teach now and here in this America of ours whose meaning no man can yet comprehend? And, when we have settled what it is best to teach, comes the further question, How are we to teach it? Whether with an eye to its effect on developing character or personal availability, that is to say, to its effect in the conduct of life, or on the chances of getting a livelihood? Perhaps we shall find that we must have a care for both, and I cannot see why the two need be incompatible; but if they are, I should choose the former term of the alternative.

In a not remote past, society had still certain

recognized, authoritative guides, and the College trained them as the fashion of the day required. But

“*Damnosa quid non imminuit dies ?*”

That ancient close corporation of official guides has been compelled to surrender its charter. We are pestered with as many volunteers as at Niagara, and, as there, if we follow any of them, may count on paying for it pretty dearly. The office of the higher instruction, nevertheless, continues to be as it always was, the training of such guides; only it must now try to fit them out with as much more personal accomplishment and authority as may compensate the loss of hierarchical prestige.

When President Walker, it must be now nearly thirty years ago, asked me in common with my colleagues what my notion of a university was, I answered, “A university is a place where nothing useful is taught; but a university is possible only where a man may get his livelihood by digging Sanscrit roots.” What I meant was that the highest office of the somewhat complex thing so named was to distribute the true Bread of Life, the *pane degli angeli*, as Dante called it, and to breed an appetite for it; but that it should also have the means and appliances for teaching everything, as the mediæval universities aimed to do in their *trivium* and *quadrivium*. I had in mind the ideal and the practical sides of the institution, and was thinking also whether such an institution was practicable, and, if so, whether it was desirable, in a country like this. I think it eminently desirable, and,

if it be, what should be its chief function? I choose rather to hesitate my opinion than to assert it roundly. But some opinion I am bound to have, either my own or another man's, if I would be in the fashion, though I may not be wholly satisfied with the one or the other. Opinions are "as handy," to borrow our Yankee proverb, "as a pocket in a shirt," and, I may add, as hard to come at. I hope, then, that the day will come when a competent professor may lecture here also for three years on the first three vowels of the Romance alphabet, and find fit audience, though few. I hope the day may never come when the weightier matters of a language, namely, such parts of its literature as have overcome death by reason of their wisdom and of the beauty in which it is incarnated, such parts as are universal by reason of their civilizing properties, their power to elevate and fortify the mind, — I hope the day may never come when these are not predominant in the teaching given here. Let the Humanities be maintained undiminished in their ancient right. Leave in their traditional preëminence those arts that were rightly called liberal; those studies that kindle the imagination, and through it irradiate the reason; those studies that manumitted the modern mind; those in which the brains of finest temper have found alike their stimulus and their repose, taught by them that the power of intellect is heightened in proportion as it is made gracious by measure and symmetry. Give us science, too, but give first of all, and last of all, the science that ennobles life and makes it gen-

erous. I stand here as a man of letters, and as a man of letters I must speak. But I am speaking with no exclusive intention. No one believes more firmly than I in the usefulness, I might well say the necessity, of variety in study, and of opening the freest scope possible to the prevailing bent of every mind when that bent shows itself to be so predominating as to warrant it. Many-sidedness of culture makes our vision clearer and keener in particulars. For after all, the noblest definition of Science is that breadth and impartiality of view which liberates the mind from specialties, and enables it to organize whatever we learn, so that it become real Knowledge by being brought into true and helpful relation with the rest.

By far the most important change that has been introduced into the theory and practice of our teaching here by the new position in which we find ourselves has been that of the elective or voluntary system of studies. We have justified ourselves by the familiar proverb that one man may lead a horse to water, but ten can't make him drink. Proverbs are excellent things, but we should not let even proverbs bully us. They are the wisdom of the understanding, not of the higher reason. There is another animal, which even Simonides could compliment only on the spindle-side of his pedigree, and which ten men could not lead to water, much less make him drink when they got him thither. Are we not trying to force university forms into college methods too narrow for them? There is some danger that the elective system may be pushed

too far and too fast. There are not a few who think that it has gone too far already. And they think so because we are in process of transformation, still in the hobbledehoy period, not having ceased to be a college, nor yet having reached the full manhood of a university, so that we speak with that ambiguous voice, half bass, half treble, or mixed of both, which is proper to a certain stage of adolescence. We are trying to do two things with one tool, and that tool not specially adapted to either. Are our students old enough thoroughly to understand the import of the choice they are called on to make, and, if old enough, are they wise enough? Shall their parents make the choice for them? I am not sure that even parents are so wise as the unbroken experience and practice of mankind. We are comforted by being told that in this we are only complying with what is called the Spirit of the Age, which may be, after all, only a finer name for the mischievous goblin known to our forefathers as Puck. I have seen several Spirits of the Age in my time, of very different voices and summoning in very different directions, but unanimous in their propensity to land us in the mire at last. Would it not be safer to make sure first whether the Spirit of the Age, who would be a very insignificant fellow if we docked him of his capitals, be not a lying spirit, since such there are? It is at least curious that, while the more advanced teaching has a strong drift in the voluntary direction, the compulsory system, as respects primary studies, is gaining ground. Is it indeed so self-

evident a proposition as it seems to many that "You may" is as wholesome a lesson for youth as "You must"? Is it so good a fore-schooling for Life, which will be a teacher of quite other mood, making us learn, rod in hand, precisely those lessons we should not have chosen? I have, to be sure, heard the late President Quincy (*clarum et venerabile nomen*) say that if a young man came hither and did nothing more than rub his shoulders against the college buildings for four years, he would imbibe some tincture of sound learning by an involuntary process of absorption. The founders of the College also believed in some impulses towards science communicated *â tergo* but of sharper virtue, and accordingly armed their president with that *ductor dubitantium* which was wielded to such good purpose by the Reverend James Bowyer at Christ's Hospital in the days of Coleridge and Lamb. They believed with the old poet that whipping was "a wild benefit of nature," and, could they have read Wordsworth's exquisite stanza, —

"One impulse from a vernal wood
Can teach us more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can,"

they would have struck out "vernal" and inserted "birchen" on the margin.

I am not, of course, arguing in favor of a return to those vapulatory methods, but the birch, like many other things that have passed out of the region of the practical, may have another term of

usefulness as a symbol after it has ceased to be a reality.

One is sometimes tempted to think that all learning is as repulsive to ingenuous youth as the multiplication table to Scott's little friend Marjorie Fleming, though this is due in great part to mechanical methods of teaching. "I am now going to tell you," she writes, "the horrible and wretched plaege that my multiplication table gives me; you can't conceive it; the most Devilish thing is 8 times 8 and 7 times 7; it is what nature itself can't endure." I know that I am approaching treacherous ashes which cover burning coals, but I must on. Is not Greek, nay, even Latin, yet more unendurable than poor Marjorie's task? How many boys have not sympathized with Heine in hating the Romans because they invented Latin Grammar? And they were quite right, for we begin the study of languages at the wrong end, at the end which nature does not offer us, and are thoroughly tired of them before we arrive at them, if you will pardon the bull. But is that any reason for not studying them in the right way? I am familiar with the arguments for making the study of Greek especially a matter of choice or chance. I admit their plausibility and the honesty of those who urge them. I should be willing also to admit that the study of the ancient languages without the hope or the prospect of going on to what they contain would be useful only as a form of intellectual gymnastics. Even so they would be as serviceable as the higher mathematics to most of us. But I

think that a wise teacher should adapt his tasks to the highest, and not the lowest, capacities of the taught. For those lower also they would not be wholly without profit. When there is a tedious sermon, says George Herbert,

“God takes a text and teacheth patience,”

not the least pregnant of lessons. One of the arguments against the compulsory study of Greek, namely, that it is wiser to give our time to modern languages and modern history than to dead languages and ancient history, involves, I think, a verbal fallacy. Only those languages can properly be called dead in which nothing living has been written. If the classic languages are dead, they yet speak to us, and with a clearer voice than that of any living tongue.

“Graiiis ingenium, Graiis dedit ore rotundo
Musa loqui, præter laudem nullius avaris.”

If their language is dead, yet the literature it enshrines is rammed with life as perhaps no other writing, except Shakespeare's, ever was or will be. It is as contemporary with to-day as with the ears it first enraptured, for it appeals not to the man of then or now, but to the entire round of human nature itself. Men are ephemeral or evanescent, but whatever page the authentic soul of man has touched with her immortalizing finger, no matter how long ago, is still young and fair as it was to the world's gray fathers. Oblivion looks in the face of the Grecian Muse only to forget her errand. Plato and Aristotle are not names but

things. On a chart that should represent the firm earth and wavering oceans of the human mind, they would be marked as mountain-ranges, forever modifying the temperature, the currents, and the atmosphere of thought, astronomical stations whence the movements of the lamps of heaven might best be observed and predicted. Even for the mastering of our own tongue, there is no expedient so fruitful as translation out of another; how much more when that other is a language at once so precise and so flexible as the Greek! Greek literature is also the most fruitful comment on our own. Coleridge has told us with what profit he was made to study Shakespeare and Milton in conjunction with the Greek dramatists. It is no sentimental argument for this study that the most justly balanced, the most serene, and the most fecundating minds since the revival of learning have been steeped in and saturated with Greek literature. We know not whither other studies will lead us, especially if dissociated from this; we do know to what summits, far above our lower region of turmoil, this has led, and what the many-sided outlook thence. Will such studies make anachronisms of us, unfit us for the duties and the business of to-day? I can recall no writer more truly modern than Montaigne, who was almost more at home in Athens and Rome than in Paris. Yet he was a thrifty manager of his estate and a most competent mayor of Bordeaux. I remember passing once in London where demolition for a new thoroughfare was going on. Many houses left

standing in the rear of those cleared away bore signs with the inscription "Ancient Lights." This was the protest of their owners against being built out by the new improvements from such glimpse of heaven as their fathers had, without adequate equivalent. I laid the moral to heart.

I am speaking of the College as it has always existed and still exists. In so far as it may be driven to put on the forms of the university, — I do not mean the four Faculties, merely, but in the modern sense, — we shall naturally find ourselves compelled to assume the method with the function. Some day we shall offer here a chance, at least, to acquire the *omne scibile*. I shall be glad, as shall we all, when the young American need no longer go abroad for any part of his training, though that may not be always a disadvantage, if Shakespeare was right in thinking that

"Home-keeping youths have ever homely wits."

I should be still gladder if Harvard should be the place that offered the alternative. It seems more than ever probable that this will happen, and happen in our day. And whenever it does happen, it will be due, more than to any and all others, to the able, energetic, single-minded, and yet fair-minded man who has presided over the College during the trying period of transition, and who will by a rare combination of eminent qualities carry that transition forward to its accomplishment without haste and without jar, — *ohne Hast, ohne Rast*. He more than any of his distinguished

predecessors has brought the university into closer and more telling relations with the national life in whatever that life has which is most distinctive and most hopeful.

But we still mainly occupy the position of a German Gymnasium. Under existing circumstances, therefore, and with the methods of teaching they enforce, I think that special and advanced courses should be pushed on, so far as possible, as the other professional courses are, into the post-graduate period. The opportunity would be greater because the number would be less, and the teaching not only more thorough, but more vivifying through the more intimate relation of teacher and pupil. Under those conditions the voluntary system will not only be possible, but will come of itself, for every student will know what he wants and where he may get it, and learning will be loved, as it should be, for its own sake as well as for what it gives. The friends of university training can do nothing that would forward it more than the founding of post-graduate fellowships and the building and endowing of a hall where the holders of them might be commensals, remembering that when Cardinal Wolsey built Christ Church at Oxford his first care was the kitchen. Nothing is so great a quickener of the faculties, or so likely to prevent their being narrowed to a single groove, as the frequent social commingling of men who are aiming at one goal by different paths. If you would have really great scholars, and our life offers no prizes for such, it would be well if the

university could offer them. I have often been struck with the many-sided versatility of the Fellows of English colleges who have kept their wits in training by continual fence one with another.

During the first two centuries of her existence, it may be affirmed that Harvard did sufficiently well the only work she was called on to do, perhaps the only work it was possible for her to do. She gave to Boston her scholarly impress, to the Commonwealth her scholastic impulse. To the clergy of her training was mainly intrusted the oversight of the public schools; these were, as I have said, though indirectly, feeders of the College, for their teaching was of the plainest. But if a boy in any country village showed uncommon parts, the clergyman was sure to hear of it. He and the Squire and the Doctor, if there was one, talked it over, and that boy was sure to be helped onward to college; for next to the five points of Calvinism our ancestors believed in a college education, that is, in the best education that was to be had. The system, if system it should be called, was a good one, a practical application of the doctrine of Natural Selection. Ah! how the parents — nay, the whole family — moiled and pinched that their boy might have the chance denied to them! Mr. Matthew Arnold has told us that in contemporary France, which seems doomed to try every theory of enlightenment by which the fingers may be burned or the house set on fire, the children of the public schools are taught in answer to the question, "Who gives you all these fine things?" to say, "The State."

Ill fares the State in which the parental image is replaced by an abstraction. The answer of the boy of whom I have been speaking would have been in a spirit better for the State and for the hope of his own future life: "I owe them, under God, to my own industry, to the sacrifices of my father and mother, and to the sympathy of good men." Nor was the boy's self-respect lessened, for the aid was given by loans, to be repaid when possible. The times have changed, and it is no longer the ambition of a promising boy to go to college. They are taught to think that a common-school education is good enough for all practical purposes. And so perhaps it is, but not for all ideal purposes. Our public schools teach too little or too much: too little if education is to go no further, too many things if what is taught is to be taught thoroughly; and the more they *seem* to teach, the less likely is education to go further, for it is one of the prime weaknesses of a democracy to be satisfied with the second-best if it appear to answer the purpose tolerably well, and to be cheaper — as it never is in the long run.

Our ancestors believed in education, but not in making it wholly eleemosynary. And they were wise in this, for men do not value what they get for nothing any more than they value air and light till deprived of them. It is quite proper that the cost of our public schools should be paid by the rich, for it is their interest, as Lord Sherbrooke said, "to educate their rulers." But it is to make paupers of the pupils to furnish them, as is now pro-

posed, with text-books, slates, and the like at public cost. This is an advance towards that State Socialism which, if it ever prevail, will be deadly to certain homespun virtues far more precious than most of the book-knowledge in the world. It is to be hoped that our higher institutions of learning may again be brought to bear, as once they did, more directly on the lower, that they may again come into such closer and graduated relation with them as may make the higher education the goal to which all who show a clear aptitude shall aspire. I know that we cannot have ideal teachers in our public schools for the price we pay or in the numbers we require. But teaching, like water, can rise no higher than its source, and, like water again, it has a lazy aptitude for running down-hill unless a constant impulse be applied in the other direction. Would not this impulse be furnished by the ambition to send on as many pupils as possible to the wider sphere of the university? Would not this organic relation to the Higher Education necessitate a corresponding rise in the grade of intelligence, capacity, and culture demanded in the teachers?

Harvard has done much by raising its standard to force upwards that also of the preparatory schools. The leaven thus infused will, let us hope, filter gradually downwards till it raise a ferment in the lower grades as well. What we need more than anything else is to increase the number of our highly cultivated men and thoroughly trained minds; for these, wherever they go, are sure to

carry with them, consciously or not, the seeds of sounder thinking and of higher ideals. The only way in which our civilization can be maintained even at the level it has reached, the only way in which that level can be made more general and be raised higher, is by bringing the influence of the more cultivated to bear with greater energy and directness on the less cultivated, and by opening more inlets to those indirect influences which make for refinement of mind and body. Democracy must show its capacity for producing not a higher average man, but the highest possible types of manhood in all its manifold varieties, or it is a failure. No matter what it does for the body, if it do not in some sort satisfy that inextinguishable passion of the soul for something that lifts life away from prose, from the common and the vulgar, it is a failure. Unless it know how to make itself gracious and winning, it is a failure. Has it done this? Is it doing this? Or trying to do it? Not yet, I think, if one may judge by that commonplace of our newspapers that an American who stays long enough in Europe is sure to find his own country unendurable when he comes back. This is not true, if I may judge from some little experience, but it is interesting as implying a certain consciousness, which is of the most hopeful augury. But we must not be impatient; it is a far cry from the dwellers in caves to even such civilization as we have achieved. I am conscious that life has been trying to civilize me for now nearly seventy years with what seem to me very inadequate results. *We*

cannot afford to wait, but the Race can. And when I speak of civilization I mean those things that tend to develop the moral forces of Man, and not merely to quicken his æsthetic sensibility, though there is often a nearer relation between the two than is popularly believed.

The tendency of a prosperous Democracy — and hitherto we have had little to do but prosper — is towards an overweening confidence in itself and its home-made methods, an overestimate of material success, and a corresponding indifference to the things of the mind. The popular ideal of success seems to be more than ever before the accumulation of riches. I say “seems,” for it may be only because the opportunities are greater. I am not ignorant that wealth is the great fertilizer of civilization, and of the arts that beautify it. The very names of civilization and politeness show that the refinement of manners which made the arts possible is the birth of cities, where wealth earliest accumulated because it found itself secure. Wealth may be an excellent thing, for it means power, it means leisure, it means liberty.

But these, divorced from culture, that is, from intelligent purpose, become the very mockery of their own essence, not goods, but evils fatal to their possessor, and bring with them, like the Niblung hoard, a doom instead of a blessing. A man rich only for himself has a life as barren and cheerless as that of the serpent set to guard a buried treasure. I am saddened when I see our success as a nation measured by the number of acres under

tillage or bushels of wheat exported ; for the real value of a country must be weighed in scales more delicate than the Balance of Trade. The garnerers of Sicily are empty now, but the bees from all climes still fetch honey from the tiny garden-plot of Theocritus. On a map of the world you may cover Judea with your thumb, Athens with a fingertip, and neither of them figures in the *Prices Current* ; but they still lord it in the thought and action of every civilized man. Did not Dante cover with his hood all that was Italy six hundred years ago ? And, if we go back a century, where was Germany outside of Weimar ? Material success is good, but only as the necessary preliminary of better things. The measure of a nation's true success is the amount it has contributed to the thought, the moral energy, the intellectual happiness, the spiritual hope and consolation, of mankind. There is no other, let our candidates flatter us as they may. We still make a confusion between huge and great. I know that I am repeating truisms, but they are truisms that need to be repeated in season and out of season.

The most precious property of Culture and of a college as its trustee is to maintain higher ideals of life and its purpose, to keep trimmed and burning the lamps of that pharos, built by wiser than we, which warns from the reefs and shallows of popular doctrine. In proportion as there are more thoroughly cultivated persons in a community will the finer uses of prosperity be taught and the vulgar uses of it become disreputable. And it is such

persons that we are commissioned to send out with such consciousness of their fortunate vocation and such devotion to it as we may. We are confronted with unexampled problems. First of all is democracy, and that under conditions in great part novel, with its hitherto imperfectly tabulated results, whether we consider its effect upon national character, on popular thought, or on the functions of law and government; we have to deal with a time when the belief seems to be spreading that truth not only can but should be settled by a show of hands rather than by a count of heads, and that one man is as good as another for all purposes, — as, indeed, he is till a real man is needed; with a time when the press is more potent for good or for evil than ever any human agency was before, and yet is controlled more than ever before, by its interests as a business rather than by its sense of duty as a teacher, and must purvey news instead of intelligence; with a time when divers and strange doctrines touching the greatest human interests are allowed to run about unmuzzled in greater number and variety than ever before since the Reformation passed into its stage of putrefactive fermentation; with a time when the idols of the market-place are more devoutly worshipped than ever Diana of the Ephesians was; when the guilds of the Middle Ages are revived among us with the avowed purpose of renewing by the misuse of universal suffrage the class-legislation to escape which we left the Old World; when the electric telegraph, by making public opinion simultaneous, is also making

it liable to those delusions, panics, and gregarious impulses which transform otherwise reasonable men into a mob; and when, above all, the better mind of the country is said to be growing more and more alienated from the highest of all sciences and services, the government of it. I have drawn up a dreary catalogue, and the moral it points is this: That the College, in so far as it continues to be still a college, as in great part it does and must, is and should be limited by certain preëxisting conditions, and must consider first what the more general objects of education are without neglecting special aptitudes more than cannot be helped. That more general purpose is, I take it, to set free, to supple, and to train the faculties in such wise as shall make them most effective for whatever task life may afterwards set them, for the duties of life rather than for its business, and to open windows on every side of the mind where thickness of wall does not prevent it.

Let our aim be, as hitherto, to give a good all-round education fitted to cope with as many exigencies of the day as possible. I had rather the College should turn out one of Aristotle's four-square men, capable of holding his own in whatever field he may be cast, than a score of lopsided ones developed abnormally in one direction. Our scheme should be adapted to the wants of the majority of under-graduates, to the objects that drew them hither, and to such training as will make the most of them after they come. Special aptitudes are sure to take care of themselves, but

the latent possibilities of the average mind can only be discovered by experiment in many directions. When I speak of the average mind, I do not mean that the courses of study should be adapted to the average level of intelligence, but to the highest, for in these matters it is wiser to grade upwards than downwards, since the best is the only thing that is good enough. To keep the wing-footed down to the pace of the leaden-soled disheartens the one without in the least encouraging the other. "Brains," says Machiavelli, "are of three generations, those that understand of themselves, those that understand when another shows them, and those that understand neither of themselves nor by the showing of others." It is the first class that should set the stint; the second will get on better than if they had set it themselves; and the third will at least have the pleasure of watching the others show their paces.

In the College proper, I repeat, for it is the birthday of the College that we are celebrating, it is the College that we love and of which we are proud, let it continue to give such a training as will fit the rich to be trusted with riches, and the poor to withstand the temptations of poverty. Give to History, give to Political Economy, that ample verge the times demand, but with no detriment to those liberal Arts which have formed open-minded men and good citizens in the past, nor have lost the skill to form them. Let it be our hope to make a gentleman of every youth who is put under our charge; not a conventional gentleman, but a

man of culture, a man of intellectual resource, a man of public spirit, a man of refinement, with that good taste which is the conscience of the mind, and that conscience which is the good taste of the soul. This we have tried to do in the past, this let us try to do in the future. We cannot do this for all, at best, — perhaps only for the few; but the influence for good of a highly trained intelligence and a harmoniously developed character is incalculable; for though it be subtle and gradual in its operation, it is as pervasive as it is subtle. There may be few of these, there must be few, but

“That few is all the world which with a few
Doth ever live and move and work and stirre.”

If these few can best be winnowed from the rest by the elective system of studies, if the drift of our colleges towards that system be general and involuntary, showing a demand for it in the conditions of American life, then I should wish to see it unfalteringly carried through. I am sure that the matter will be handled wisely and with all forethought by those most intimately concerned in the government of the College.

They who, on a tiny clearing pared from the edge of the woods, built here, most probably with the timber hewed from the trees they felled, our earliest hall, with the solitude of ocean behind them, the mystery of forest before them, and all about them a desolation, must surely (*si quis animis celestibus locus*) share our gladness and our gratitude at the splendid fulfilment of their vision. If we could but have preserved the humble roof

which housed so great a future, Mr. Ruskin himself would almost have admitted that no castle or cathedral was ever richer in sacred associations, in pathos of the past, and in moral significance. They who reared it had the sublime prescience of that courage which fears only God, and could say confidently in the face of all discouragement and doubt, "He hath led me forth into a large place; because he delighted in me, He hath delivered me." We cannot honor them too much; we can repay them only by showing, as occasions rise, that we do not undervalue the worth of their example.

Brethren of the Alumni, it now becomes my duty to welcome in your name the guests who have come, some of them so far, to share our congratulations and hopes to-day. I cannot name them all and give to each his fitting phrase. Thrice welcome to them all, and, as is fitting, first to those from abroad, representatives of illustrious seats of learning that were old in usefulness and fame when ours was in its cradle; and next to those of our own land, from colleges and universities which, if not daughters of Harvard, are young enough to be so, and are one with her in heart and hope. I said that I should single out none by name, but I should not represent you fitly if I gave no special greeting to the gentleman who brings the message of John Harvard's College, Emmanuel. The welcome we give him could not be warmer than that which we offer to his colleagues, but we cannot help feeling that in pressing his hand our own instinctively closes a little more tightly, as with a sense of nearer

kindred. There is also one other name of which it would be indecorous not to make an exception. You all know that I can mean only the President of our Republic. His presence is a signal honor to us all, and to us all I may say a personal gratification. We have no politics here, but the sons of Harvard all belong to the party which admires courage, strength of purpose, and fidelity to duty, and which respects, wherever he may be found, the

“*Justum ac tenacem propositi virum,*”

who knows how to withstand the

“*Civium ardor prava jubentium.*”

He has left the helm of state to be with us here, and so long as it is intrusted to his hands we are sure that, should the storm come, he will say with Seneca's Pilot, “O Neptune, you may save me if you will ; you may sink me if you will ; but whatever happen, I shall keep my rudder true.”

TARIFF REFORM

ADDRESS AT A MEETING OF THE TARIFF REFORM
LEAGUE, BOSTON, DECEMBER 29, 1887.

GENTLEMEN : In what I have to say (and it will not tax your patience long) I shall discreetly confine myself to generalities. These are apt, I know, to flatten into platitudes, unless handled with practical dexterity. But I had rather run the risk of this than abuse the chairman's privilege of speaking first, as I have sometimes seen it abused to my own detriment. I shall be careful not to devastate the speeches of those who are to come after me by trying to show how many fine things I can say about the subject which will be the chief topic of discussion to-night. I shall prefer to let you suppose that I could say them if I would. For I consider the true office of a chairman on such occasions to be that of the heralds who blow a few conventional notes to announce that the lists are open.

At this season, which custom has set apart for mutual good wishes and felicitations, members of a common kindred are wont to accentuate the feeling that is in all hearts by gathering round a board whose good cheer is at once the symbol and the stimulant of the generous sympathies within. Our

festival seems to be prettily analogous with those others more peculiar to the season. For there are affinities of sentiment, there is a kinship of thought, and of the opinions and conduct that come of thinking, which often bind men together more closely than ties of blood. We are, it is true, of kin to each other as the children of a common country, but we are more nearly related, we are more vitally stirred by a consent of judgment in what we believe to be for the honor and the welfare of the Mother so dear to us all.

This is no doubt a political meeting; but most of you would not be here, I certainly should not be here, had this been a conspiracy in the interest of any party or of any faction within a party, had it been, that is to say, political in that ill sense which our practice, if not our theory, has given to what should be the noblest exercise of man's intellect and the best training of his character. I believe, and am glad to believe, that all shades of party allegiance are represented here. If, in a free commonwealth, government by party be a necessary expedient, it also is a necessary evil, an evil chiefly in this, that it enables men, nay, even forces them, to postpone interests of prime import and consequence to secondary and ephemeral, often to personal interests, and not only so, but to confound one with the other. The success of the party becomes only too soon of more importance than that of any principles it may be supposed to have or to profess. Is not the main use of a party platform that a screen may be built of its planks to hide its

principles from every profane eye? Has not the youngest of us seen parties repeatedly "change sides" with the airy gravity of a country dance? Our party arrangements and contrivances are grown so intricate, too frequently so base, that the management of them has become a gainful profession, and the class of men who should shape public opinion and control the practical application of it, are reduced to handing the highest duty the State has entrusted them with to attorneys, not of their own choice, whose hands are not too delicate to be dipped into the nauseous mess with which they are too fastidious to soil their own. I do not believe that there is a man at this table who for the last twenty years has been able to embody his honest opinion, or even a fraction of it, in his vote. During all those years no thoughtful man has been able to see any other difference between the two great parties which stood between him and the reforms he deemed essential to the well being of his country than that the one was *in* and wished to stay there, and the other was *out* and *did n't* wish to stay there. Each appeared to make use of the same unworthy tricks for its own immediate advantage, each had an abundance of aces in its sleeve, and each was divided on the two great questions of vital interest to the country, the tariff and finance. If our politicians would devote to the study and teaching of political economy half the time they spend in trying to agree so as not to agree with the latest attempt of the Knights of Labor to unhorse the Nature of Things, they would be far less harm-

ful to themselves and to the country. Party allegiance tends naturally to concentrate upon some representative or available man, and from this to degenerate into a policy of the strongest lungs, by which voters are driven, as sheep are driven, blinded by the dust themselves have raised, to over-trample whatever obstacle of prudence or reflection may stand in their way. Have we not more than once seen men nominated for the highest office of the State because they had no "record," as it is called, that is, men with no opinion that could be found out, but who would serve as well as another (under strict supervision) to divide the booty? Nothing will ever persuade me that the American people would select such men as the representatives of their ideal, if they could help it. It is the duty of all sedate and thoughtful people to help them to help it by every honest means; if party be a miserable necessity, it is the business of all such to mitigate, if they cannot nullify, its evils whenever they have the chance.

One, certainly, of the reasons which have brought us hither, one, at least, of those that chiefly suggested the opportuneness of our coming together here, has been the President's message at the opening of the present Congress. Personally, I confess that I feel myself strongly attracted to Mr. Cleveland as the best representative of the higher type of Americanism that we have seen since Lincoln was snatched from us. And by Americanism I mean that which we cannot help, not that which we flaunt, that way of looking at things and of

treating men which we derive from the soil that holds our fathers and waits for us. I think we have all recognized in him a manly simplicity of character and an honest endeavor to do all that he could of duty, when all that he would was made impossible by difficulties to the hourly trials and temptations of which we have fortunately never been exposed. But we are not here to thank him as the head of a party. We are here to felicitate each other that the presidential chair has a MAN in it, and this means that every word he *says* is weighted with what he *is*. We are here to felicitate each other that this man understands politics to mean business, not chicanery; plain speaking, not paltering with us in a double sense; that he has had the courage to tell the truth to the country without regard to personal or party consequences, and thus to remind us that a country not worth telling the truth to is not worth living in, nay, deserves to have lies told it, and to take the inevitable consequences in calamity. If it be lamentable that acts of official courage should have become so rare among us as to be noteworthy, it is consoling to believe that they are sometimes contagious. "So shines a good deed in a naughty world!" As courage is preëminently the virtue of men, so it is the virtue which most powerfully challenges the respect and emulation of men. And it deserves this preëminence, for it is also the virtue which gives security to all the other virtues. We thank the President for having taught a most pertinent object lesson, and from a platform lofty enough to

be seen of all the people. We should be glad to think, though we hardly dare to hope, that some of the waiters on popular providence whom we humorously call statesmen would profit by it. As one of the evil phenomena which are said to mark the advances of democracy is the decay of civic courage, we should be grateful to the President for giving us reason to think that this is rather one of its accidents than of its properties. Whatever be the effect of Mr. Cleveland's action on his personal fortunes, let us rejoice to think it will be a stimulating thorn in that august chair for all that may sit in it after him. Would that all our presidents might see and lay to heart that vision which Dion saw, that silent shape of woman sweeping and ever sweeping without pause. Our politics call loudly for a broom. There are rubbish-heaps of cant in every corner of them that should be swept out for the dustman Time to cart away and dump beyond sight or smell of mortal man. Mr. Cleveland, I think, has found the broom and begun to ply it.

But, gentlemen, the President has set us an example not only of courage, but of good sense and moderation. He has kept strictly to his text and his purpose. He has stated the facts and marshalled the figures without drawing further inferences from them than were implicitly there. He has confined himself to the economic question, to that which directly concerns the national housekeeping. He has not allowed himself to be lured from the direct forthright by any temptation to discuss the more general and at present mainly academic ques-

tions of free trade or protection. He has shown us that there was such a thing as being protected too much, and that we had protected our shipping interests so effectually that they had ceased to need protection by ceasing to exist. In thus limiting the field of his warning and his counsels he has done wisely, and we shall do wisely in following his example. His facts and his figures will work all the more effectually. But we must be patient with them and expect them to work slowly. Enormous interests are involved and must be treated tenderly. It was sixty years before the leaven of Adam Smith impregnated the whole sluggish lump of British opinion, and we are a batch of the same dough. I can remember the time when bounties were paid for the raising of wheat in Massachusetts. Bounties have fallen into discredit now. They have taken an alias and play their three-card trick as subsidies or as protection to labor, but the common sense of our people will find them out at last. If we are not to expect any other immediate result from the message than that best result of all human speech, that it awaken thought, one can at least already thank it for one signal and unquestionable benefit. It is dividing, and will continue more and more to divide, our parties by the lines of natural cleavage, and will close the artificial and often mischievous lines which followed the boundaries of section or the tracings of bygone prejudices. We have here a question which equally concerns every man, woman, and child, black or white, from the Atlantic to the Pacific,

from the Gulf of Mexico to the Bay of Fundy. We have here a topic which renders nugatory all those problems of ancient history which we debated and settled more than twenty years ago by manly wager of battle, and that so definitely that we welcome here to-night with special pleasure some of the brave men with whom we argued them, and whom we insisted all the more on keeping as countrymen, that they had taught us how to value them.

Gentlemen, I think I have occupied as much of your time as a chairman should. I will only ask your patience while I detain you for a moment longer from other speakers, whom I am as eager to hear as you must be. The allusion to our civil war, which I made a moment ago, suggests to me a thought which I should be glad to share with you before I close. That tremendous convulsion, as, I believe, even those engaged on the losing side now see as clearly as we, saved us a country that was worth saving, so that properly there *was* no losing side. Now what I wish to say is this, that a country worth saving is worth saving all the time, and that a country with such energies as ours, with such opportunities and inducements to grow rich, and such temptations to be content with growing rich, *needs* saving all the time. Many of us remember, as they remember nothing else, the overwhelming rush of that great national passion, obliterating all lines of party division and levelling all the landmarks of habitual politics. Who that saw it will ever forget that enthusiasm of loyalty for the flag and for what the flag symbolized which

twenty-six years ago swept all the country's forces of thought and sentiment, of memory and hope, into the grasp of its overmastering torrent? Martial patriotism touches the heart, kindles the imagination, and rouses the nobler energies of men as nothing else ever does or can. Even love is a paler emotion. That image of our Country with the flame of battle in her eyes which every man then saw, how beautiful it was, how potent to inspire devotion! But these ecstasies of emotion are by their very nature as transient as they are ennobling. There is a sedater kind of patriotism, less picturesque, less inspiring, but quite as admirably serviceable in the prosy days of peace. It is the patient patriotism which strives to enlighten public opinion and to redress the balance of party spirit, which inculcates civic courage and independence of mind, which refuses to accept clamor as argument, or to believe that phrases become syllogisms by repetition. It is this more modest and thoughtful patriotism to the exemplifying and practice of which we aspire, and the first lesson it teaches us is that a moderated and controlled enthusiasm is, like stored electricity, the most powerful of motive forces, and that the reformer of practical abuses, springing from economic ignorance or mistake, then first begins to be wise when he allows for the obstinate vitality of human error and human folly, and is willing to believe that those who cannot see as he does are not therefore necessarily bad men.

THE PLACE OF THE INDEPENDENT IN POLITICS.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE REFORM CLUB OF
NEW YORK, AT STEINWAY HALL, APRIL 13, 1888.

I HAVE not been so much surprised as perhaps I ought to have been to learn that, in the opinion of some of our leading politicians and of many of our newspapers, men of scholarly minds are *ipso facto* debarred from forming any judgment on public affairs; or, if they should be so unscrupulous as to do so, that they must at least refrain from communicating it to their fellow-citizens. One eminent gentleman has even gone so far as to sneer at school-books as sources of information. If he had a chance, he would perhaps take a hint from what is fabled of the Caliph Omar, and burn our libraries: because if they contained doctrine not to be found in his speeches, they would be harmful, while if the doctrine, judged by that test, were orthodox, they would be useless. Books have hitherto been supposed to be armories of human experience, where we might equip ourselves for the battles of opinion while we had yet vigor and hopefulness enough left to make our weapons of some avail.

Through books the youngest of us could con-

verse with more generations than Nestor; could attain that ripened judgment which is the privilege of old age without old age's drawbacks and diminutions. This has been the opinion of many men, not reckoned the least wise in their generation. But they were mistaken, it seems. I looked round with saddened wonder at the costly apparatus of school-houses provided by our ancestors to the avowed end that "good learning might not cease from among us," at the libraries and universities by the founding of which our rich men seek to atone for their too rapidly agglomerated wealth, and said to myself, "What a wasteful blunder we have been making!" Then it suddenly occurred to me that this putting of culture under the ban might be, after all, but a more subtle application of the American system, as it is called, which would exclude all foreign experience, as well as the raw material of it, till we had built up an experience of our own at the same cost of mistake and retribution which is its unvarying price. This might indeed flatter my pride of country, though it left me, as Grumio says, to "return unexperienced to my grave."

But if we are forbidden to seek knowledge in books, what is the alternative? I could think of none unless it were immediate inspiration. It is true that I could not see that any authentic marks of it were revealed by the advocates of this novel theory. They keep their secret remarkably well. No doubt inspiration, like money, is a very handy thing to have, and if I should ever see an adver-

tisement of any shop where it could be bought, even at second hand, I would lay in a stock of it forthwith. It is more convenient than knowledge, for, like certain articles of wearing apparel, it is adjustable to the prevailing taste of the moment in any part of the country. It seems more studious of the traditions and prejudices of the multitude than the utterances of Isaiah were wont to be. I must frankly confess at the outset that I come to you wholly unprovided with this precious commodity. I must also admit that I am a book-man, that I am old-fashioned enough to have read many books, and that I hope to read many more. I find them easier reading than some other kinds of printed matter. I appear before you, therefore, with some diffidence, and shall make my excuses in the words of an elder who in my youth was accounted wise. Lord Bacon, a man versed both in affairs and in books, says: "And for the matter of policy and government, that learning should rather hurt than enable thereunto is a thing very improbable. We see it is accounted an error to commit a natural body to empiric physicians who commonly have a few pleasing receipts whereupon they are confident and adventurous, but know neither the causes of diseases, nor the constitutions of patients, nor peril of accidents, nor the true method of cures; we see it is a like error to rely upon advocates or lawyers who are only men of practice and not grounded in their books, who are many times easily surprised when matter falleth out beyond their experience to the prejudice of the causes they handle; so by like

reason it cannot be but a matter of doubtful consequence if states be managed by empiric statesmen not well mingled with men grounded in learning. But, contrariwise, it is almost without an instance to the contrary that ever any government was disastrous that was in the hands of learned governors." He goes on to say that "It hath been ordinary with politique men to extenuate and disable learned men by the name of *pedants*." Practical politicians, as they call themselves, have the same habit still, only that they have substituted *doctrinaire* for *pedant* as the term of reproach. Now the true and mischievous doctrinaire is he who insists that facts shall accommodate themselves to preconceived theory, and the truly practical man he who would deduce theory from the amplest possible comparison and correlation of facts; in other words, from recorded experience. I think it is already beginning to be apparent on which side of the questions which have been brought to the front by the President's Message the doctrinaires are to be found. We all know the empiric physicians who are confident and adventurous with their few pleasing receipts.

Your committee asked me to give a title to such suggestions as I might find occasion to make this evening, and I took "The Place of the Independent in Politics" as the first that occurred to me. But I confess that I partake of Mr. Walter Shandy's superstition about names, and shall not allow myself to be circumscribed and scanted of elbow-room by the appellative I have chosen. I prefer

general to personal politics. I allude to this in order that, in anything I shall say here, I may not be suspected to have one party more than another in my mind. I am not blind to the fact that Truth always seems to have gone to school to the prophet Nathan, and to intend a personal application. It is perhaps her prime virtue as a stimulant of thought, for thought is helpful in proportion as it more and more becomes disengaged from self, and this cannot happen till some sharp reminder makes us conscious of that plausible accomplice in our thinking and in the doing which follows from it. Though I shall not evade present questions when they come naturally in my way, I shall choose rather to indicate why there is a necessity that the Independent should have a place in politics than to dictate where that place should be. I think that something I wrote forty years ago, if you will allow me to quote it, will define my notion of what is meant by an Independent with sufficient exactness. I then said, and I have not changed my mind : —

I honor the man who is ready to sink
 Half his present repute for the freedom to think,
 And when he has thought, be his cause strong or weak,
 Will risk 't other half for the freedom to speak,
 Caring naught for what vengeance the mob has in store,
 Let that mob be the upper ten thousand or lower.

Four years ago I was called upon to deliver an address in Birmingham, and chose for my theme "Democracy." In that place I felt it incumbent on me to dwell on the good points and favorable aspects of democracy as I had seen them practically illustrated in my native land. I chose rather

that my discourse should suffer through inadequacy than run the risk of seeming to forget what Burke calls "that salutary prejudice called our country," and that obligation which forbids one to discuss family affairs before strangers. But here among ourselves it is clearly the duty of whoever loves his country to be watchful of whatever weaknesses and perils there may be in the practical working of a system never before set in motion under such favorable auspices, or on so large a scale. I have called them weaknesses and perils in the system, but it would be idle to discuss them if I did not believe that they were not so properly results of the system as of abuses in the operation of it, due in part to changed conditions, in part to a thoughtless negligence which experience and thought will in due time rectify. I believe that no other method of conducting the public affairs of men is so capable of sloughing off its peccant parts as ours, because in no other are the forces of life at once so intense and so universally distributed.

Before we turn to the consideration of politics as we see them in practice, let us think for a moment what, when properly understood, they really are. In their least comprehensive definition, politics are an art which concerns itself about the national housekeeping, about the immediate interests and workaday wants, the income and the outgo of the people. They have to deal with practical questions as they arise and grow pressing. Even on this humbler plane they may well have an attraction for the finest intellects and the greatest abili-

ties in a country where public opinion is supreme, for they can perform their function only by persuading, convincing, and thus governing the minds of men. The most trivial question acquires dignity when it touches the well-being or rouses the passions of many millions. But there is a higher and wider sense in which politics may fairly be ranked as a science. When they rise to this level we call them statesmanship. The statesman applies himself to the observation and recording of certain causes which lead constantly to certain effects, and is thus able to formulate general laws for the guidance of his own judgment and for the conduct of affairs. He is not so much interested in the devices by which men *may* be influenced, as about how they *ought* to be influenced; not so much about how men's passions and prejudices may be utilized for a momentary advantage to himself or his party, as about how they may be hindered from doing a permanent harm to the commonwealth. He trains himself to discern evils in their causes that he may forewarn if he cannot prevent, and that he may not be taken unawares by the long bill of damages they are sure to bring in, and always at the least convenient moment. He seeks and finds in the moral world the weather-signs of the actual world. He strives to see and know things as they really are and as they are related to each other, as they really are and therefore always must be; his vision undeflected by the cross-lights of transitory circumstance, his judgment undisturbed by the clamor of passionate and changeful opinion.

That this conception of statesmanship is not fanciful, the writings and speeches of Burke are ample proof. Many great and many acute minds had speculated upon politics from Aristotle's time downwards, but Burke was the first to illuminate the subject of his observation and thought with the electric light of imagination. He turned its penetrating ray upon what seemed the confused and wavering cloud-chaos of man's nature and man's experience, and found there the indication, at least, if not the scheme, of a divine order. The result is that his works are as full of prophecy, some of it already fulfilled, some of it in course of fulfilment, as they are of wisdom. And this is because for him human nature was always the text and history the comment. There are no more pregnant lessons in the science of how to look at things so as to see them and into them, of how to distinguish what is perennial from what is deciduous in a political question, than Burke's two speeches on "Taxation of the American Colonies" and on "Conciliation with America." For if his imagination was fervid, it served but to warm his understanding till that grew ductile enough to take a perfect impression of fact. If the one made generalization easy, the other, in testing the generalization, compelled him always to make account of the special diagnosis of the case in hand. If one would know the difference between a statesman and a politician, let him compare Burke's view of the American troubles with that of Dr. Johnson, a man of that headstrong common sense which sees with absorbing, one might

almost say blinding, clearness whatever comes within its immediate field of vision, but is conscious of nothing beyond it. The question for Burke was not whether taxation were tyranny, but whether the Americans would think it so. Here was a case in which expediency was at one with wisdom.

But I am happy in being able to find an illustration nearer home. Never did three men show more clearly the quality of true statesmanship or render a more precious service to their country than Senators Fessenden, Trumbull, and Grimes, when they dared to act independently of party in the impeachment case against President Johnson. They saved us from the creeping paralysis which is now gradually benumbing the political energies of France. Nay, while we were yet in the gristle, we produced statesmen, not, indeed, endowed with Burke's genius, though fairly comparable with him in breadth of view, and sometimes his superiors in practical sagacity. But I think there is a growing doubt whether we are not ceasing to produce them, whether perhaps we are not losing the power to produce them. The tricks of management are more and more superseding the science of government. Our methods force the growth of two kinds of politicians to the crowding out of all other varieties, — him who is called *practical*, and him of the corner grocery. The one trades in that counterfeit of public opinion which the other manufactures. Both work in the dark, and there is need that some one should turn the light of his policeman's

lantern on their doings. I believe that there is as much of the raw material of statesmanship among us as ever there was, but the duties levied by the local rings of majority-manufacturers are so high as to prohibit its entrance into competition with the protected article. Could we only have a travelling exhibition of our Bosses, and say to the American people, "Behold the shapers of your national destiny!" A single despot would be cheaper, and probably better looking. It is a natural impulse to turn away one's eyes from these flesh-flies that fatten on the sores of our body politic, and plant there the eggs of their disgusting and infectious progeny. But it is the lesson of the day that a yielding to this repulsion by the intelligent and refined is a mainly efficient cause of the evil, and must be overcome, at whatever cost of selfish ease and æsthetic comfort, ere the evil can be hopefully dealt with.

It is admitted on all hands that matters have been growing worse for the last twenty years, as it is the nature of evil to do. It is publicly asserted that admission to the Senate of the United States is a marketable thing. I know not whether this be true or not, but is it not an ominous sign of the times that this has been asserted and generally believed to be possible, if not probable? It is notorious that important elections are decided by votes bought with money, or by the more mischievous equivalent of money, places in the public service. What is even more disheartening, the tone of a large part of the press in regard to this state of

things is cynical, or even jocular. And how often do we not read in our morning paper that such and such a local politician is dictating the choice of delegates to a nominating convention, or manipulating them after they are chosen? So often that we at last take it as a matter of course, as something beyond our power to modify or control, like the weather, at which we may grumble, if we like, but cannot help. We should not tolerate a packed jury which is to decide on the fate of a single man, yet we are content to leave the life of the nation at the mercy of a packed convention. We allow ourselves to be bilked of our rights and thwarted in our duties as citizens by men in whose hands their very henchmen would be the last to trust anything more valuable than their reputation. Pessimists tell us that these things are the natural incidents and necessary consequences of representative government under democratic conditions; that we have drawn the wine, and must drink it. If I believed this to be so, I should not be speaking here to-night. Parties refuse to see, or, if they see, to look into, vicious methods which help them to a majority, and each is thus estopped from sincere protest against the same methods when employed by the other. The people of the Northern States thought four years' war not too dear a price to prevent half their country being taken from them. But the practices of which I have been speaking are slowly and surely filching from us the whole of our country,—all, at least, that made it the best to live in and the easiest to die for. If

parties will not look after their own drainage and ventilation, there must be people who will do it for them, who will cry out without ceasing till their fellow-citizens are aroused to the danger of infection. This duty can be done only by men dissociated from the interests of party. The Independents have undertaken it, and with God's help will carry it through. A moral purpose multiplies us by ten, as it multiplied the early Abolitionists. They emancipated the negro; and we mean to emancipate the respectable white man.

It is time for lovers of their country to consider how much of the success of our experiment in democracy has been due to such favorable conditions as never before concurred to make such an attempt plausible; whether those conditions have changed and are still changing for the worse; how far we have been accessories in this degeneration, if such there be, and how far it is in our power, with the means furnished by the very instruments of destruction, to stay its advance and to repair its ravages. Till within a few years of our civil war, everything conduced to our measuring the success of our institutions by the evidence of our outward prosperity, and to our seeing the future in rose-color. The hues of our dawn had scarcely faded from the sky. Men were still living who had seen the face and heard the voice of the most august personage in our history, and of others scarce less august than he. The traditions of our founders were fresh. Our growth in wealth and power was without precedent. We had been so

fortunate that we had come to look upon our luck as partly due to our own merits and partly to our form of government. When we met together it was to felicitate each other on our superiority to the rest of mankind. Our ears caught from behind the horizon the muffled thunders of war, only to be lulled as with the murmurs of the surf on a far-off shore. We heard of revolutions, but for us Fortune forgot to turn her wheel. This was what may be called the Fourth of July period of our history. Among the peoples of the earth we were the little Jack Horner. We had put in our thumb and pulled out a plum, and the rest of mankind thought that we were never tired of saying, "What a good boy am I!" Here is a picture of our growth, drawn by a friendly yet impartial hand: "Nothing in the history of mankind is like their progress. For my part, I never cast an eye on their flourishing commerce and their cultivated and commodious life but they seem to me rather ancient nations grown to perfection through a long series of fortunate events and a train of successful industry accumulating wealth in many centuries than the colonies of yesterday. . . . Your children do not grow faster from infancy to manhood than they spread from families to communities, and from villages to nations." But for a certain splendor of style these words seem to be of yesterday, so pertinent are they still. They were uttered in the British Parliament more than a year before the battle of Lexington, by Edmund Burke. There is no exaggeration in them. They are a simple statement of fact.

Burke, with his usual perspicacity, saw and stated one and a chief cause of this unprecedented phenomenon. He tells us that the colonies had made this marvellous growth because, "through a wise and salutary neglect, a generous nature has been suffered to take her own way to perfection." But by that "wise and salutary neglect" he meant freedom from the petty and short-sighted meddlesomeness of a paternal government; he meant being left to follow untrammelled the instincts of our genius under the guidance of our energy. The same causes have gone on ever since working the same marvels. Those marvels have been due in part to our political system. But there were other circumstances tending to stimulate personal energy and enterprise, especially land to be had for the taking, and free trade over a larger share of the earth's surface peopled by thriving and intelligent communities than had ever been enjoyed elsewhere. I think, however, that there was one factor more potent than any other, or than all others together. Before we broke away from the mother country politically, a century and a half of that "wise neglect" of which Burke spoke had thoroughly made over again and Americanized all the descendants of the earlier settlers, and these formed the great bulk of the population. The same process was rapidly going on in the more recent immigrants. So thorough had this process been that many, perhaps most, of the refugees who, during or after the Revolutionary War, went to England, or home, as they fondly called it, found themselves out of place and

unhappy there. The home they missed was that humane equality, not of condition or station, but of being and opportunity, which by some benign influence of the place had overcome them here, like a summer cloud, without their special wonder. Yet they felt the comfort of it as of an air wholesome to breathe. I more than suspect that it was the absence of this inestimable property of the moral atmosphere that made them aliens in every other land, and convinced them that an American can no more find another country than a second mother. This equality had not then been proclaimed as a right; it had been incorporated in no constitution, but was there by the necessity of the case — a gift of the sky and of the forest, as truly there as it now is in that great West whose history was so admirably treated by Senator Hoar a few days ago, and whose singular good-fortune it has been that no disparities except those of nature's making have ever been known there. Except in the cities of the seaboard, where the habits of the Old World had to some extent been kept alive by intercourse and importation, the defecation of the body politic and the body social of all purely artificial and arbitrary distinctions had been going on silently and surely among the masses of the people for generations. This was true (in a more limited sense) even of communities where slavery existed, for as that was based on complexion, every white, no matter what his condition, belonged to the privileged class, just as in Hungary every Magyar was a noble. This was the American novelty, no bant-

ling of theory, no fruit of forethought, no trophy of insurgent violence, but a pure evolution from the nature of man in a perfectly free medium. The essential triumph was achieved in this tacit recognition of a certain privilege and adequacy in mere manhood, and democracy may be said to have succeeded before it was accepted as doctrine or embodied as a political fact. Our ancestors sought a new country. What they found was a new condition of mind. It is more than questionable whether the same conditions in as favorable combination of time and place will ever occur again, whether equality, so wholesome when a social evolution, as I have described it, may not become harmful as a sudden gift in the form of dogma, may not indeed prove dangerous when interpreted and applied politically by millions of newcomers alien to our traditions, unsteadied by lifelong training and qualifying associations. We have great and thus far well-warranted faith in the digestive and assimilative powers of our system; but may not these be overtaxed?

The theory of equality was as old, among men of English blood, as Jack Cade's rebellion, but it was not practically conceived even by the very men who asserted it. Here, on the edge of the forest, where civilized man was brought face to face again with nature and taught to rely mainly on himself, mere manhood became a fact of prime importance. That century and a half of apprenticeship in democracy stimulated self-help, while it also necessitated helpfulness for others and mutual dependence

upon them. Not without reason did "help" take the place of "servant" in our vocabulary. But the conditions of life led to other results that left less salutary effects behind them. They bred a habit of contentment with what would *do*, as we say, rather than an impatience of whatever was not best; a readiness to put up with many evils or inconveniences, because they could not be helped; and this has, especially in our politics, conduced to the growth of the greatest weakness in our American character — the acquiescence in makeshifts and abuses which can and ought to be helped, and which, with honest resolution, might be helped.

Certainly never were the auguries so favorable as when our republic was founded, a republic sure from inherent causes to broaden into a more popular form. But while the equality of which I have been speaking existed in the instincts, the habits, and obscurely in the consciousness of all, it was latent and inert. It found little occasion for self-assertion, none for aggression, and was slow to invent one. A century ago there was still a great respect for authority in all its manifestations; for the law first of all, for age, for learning, and for experience. The community recognized and followed its natural leaders, and it was these who framed our Constitution, perhaps the most remarkable monument of political wisdom known to history. The convention which framed it was composed of the choicest material in the community, and was led astray by no theories of what *might* be good, but clung closely to what experience had demonstrated to *be* good.

The late M. Guizot once asked me "how long I thought our republic would endure." I replied: "So long as the ideas of the men who founded it continue dominant," and he assented. I will not say that we could not find among us now the constituents of as able an assembly, but I doubt if there be a single person in this audience who believes that with our present political methods we should or could elect them. We have revived the English system of rotten boroughs, under which the electors indeed return the candidate, but it is a handful of men, too often one man, that selects the person to be so returned. If this be so, and I think it is so, it should give us matter for very serious reflection.

After our Constitution got fairly into working order it really seemed as if we had invented a machine that would go of itself, and this begot a faith in our luck which even the civil war itself but momentarily disturbed. Circumstances continued favorable, and our prosperity went on increasing. I admire the splendid complacency of my countrymen, and find something exhilarating and inspiring in it. We are a nation which has *struck ile*, but we are also a nation that is sure the well will never run dry. And this confidence in our luck with the absorption in material interests, generated by unparalleled opportunity, has in some respects made us neglectful of our political duties. I have long thought that the average men of our revolutionary period were better grounded in the elementary principles of government than their de-

scendants. The town-meeting was then a better training-school than the caucus and the convention are now, and the smaller the community the greater the influence of the better mind in it. In looking about me, I am struck with the fact that while we produce great captains, financial and industrial leaders in abundance, and political managers in overabundance, there seems to be a pause in the production of leaders in statesmanship. I am still more struck with the fact that my newspaper often gives me fuller reports of the speeches of Prince Bismarck and of Mr. Gladstone than of anything said in Congress. If M. Thiers or M. Gambetta were still here, it would be the same with them; but France, like ourselves, has gone into the manufacture of small politicians. Why are we interested in what these men say? Because they are important for what they *are*, as well as for what they represent. They are Somebodies, and their every word gathers force from the character and life behind it. They stand for an idea as well as for a constituency. An adequate amount of small change will give us the equivalent of the largest piece of money, but what aggregate of little men will amount to a single great one, that most precious coinage of the mint of nature? It is not that we have lost the power of bringing forth great men. They are not the product of institutions, though these may help or hinder them. I am thankful to have been the contemporary of one and among the greatest, of whom I think it is safe to say that no other country and no other form of

government could have fashioned him, and whom posterity will recognize as the wisest and most bravely human of modern times. It is a benediction to have lived in the same age and in the same country with Abraham Lincoln.

Had democracy borne only this consummate flower and then perished like the century-plant, it would have discharged its noblest function. It is the crown of a nation, one might almost say the chief duty of a nation, to produce great men, for without them its history is but the annals of ants and bees. Two conditions are essential: the man, and the opportunity. We must wait on Mother Nature for the one, but in America we ourselves can do much to make or mar the other. We cannot always afford to set our house on fire as we did for Lincoln, but we are certainly responsible if the door to distinction be made so narrow and so low as to admit only petty and crouching men.

A democracy makes certain duties incumbent on every citizen which under other forms of government are limited to a man or to a class of men. A prudent despot looks after his kingdom as a prudent private man would look after his estate; in an aristocratic republic a delegated body of nobles manages public affairs as a board of railroad directors would manage the property committed to their charge; in both cases, self-interest is strong enough to call forth every latent energy of character and intellect; in both cases the individual is so consciously important a factor as to insure a sense of personal responsibility. In the ancient democracies

a citizen could see and feel the effect of his own vote. But in a democracy so vast as ours, though the responsibility be as great (I remember an election in which the governor of a State was chosen by a majority of one vote), yet the infinitesimal division of power wellnigh nullifies the sense of it, and of the responsibility implied in it. It is certainly a great privilege to have a direct share in the government of one's country, but it is a privilege which is of advantage to the commonwealth only in proportion as it is intelligently exercised. Then, indeed, its constant exercise should train the faculties of forethought and judgment better, and should give men a keener sense of their own value than perhaps anything else can do. But under every form of representative government, parties become necessary for the marshalling and expression of opinion, and, when parties are once formed, those questions the discussion of which would discipline and fortify men's minds tend more and more to pass out of sight, and the topics that interest their prejudices and passions to become more absorbing. What will be of immediate advantage to the party is the first thing considered, what of permanent advantage to their country the last. I refer especially to neither of the great parties which divide the country. I am treating a question of natural history. Both parties have been equally guilty, both have evaded, as successfully as they could, the living questions of the day. As the parties have become more evenly balanced, the difficulty of arriving at their opinions has been greater in pro-

portion to the difficulty of devising any profession of faith meaningless enough not to alarm, if it could not be so interpreted as to conciliate, the varied and sometimes conflicting interests of the different sections of the country. If you asked them, as *Captain Standard* in Farquahar's comedy asks *Parley*, "Have you any principles?" the answer, like his, would have been, "Five hundred." Between the two a conscientious voter feels as the traveller of fifty years ago felt between the touters of the two rival hotels in the village where the stage-coach stopped for dinner. Each side deafened him with depreciation of the other establishment till his only conclusion was that each was worse than the other, and that it mattered little at which of them he paid dearly for an indigestion. When I say that I make no distinctions between the two parties, I must be allowed to make one exception. I mean the attempt by a portion of the Republicans to utilize passions which every true lover of his country should do his best to allay, by provoking into virulence again the happily quiescent animosities of our civil war. In saying this I do not forget that the Democratic party was quite as efficient in bringing that war upon us as the seceding States themselves. Nor do I forget that it was by the same sacrifice of general and permanent interests to the demands of immediate partisan advantage which is the besetting temptation of all parties. Let bygones be bygones. Yet I may say in passing that there was something profoundly comic in the spectacle of a great party, with an

heroic past behind it, stating that its policy would be to prevent some unknown villains from doing something very wicked more than twenty years ago.

Parties being necessary things, it follows, of course, that there must be politicians to manage and leaders to represent and symbolize them. The desire of man to see his wishes, his prejudices, his aspirations, summed up and personified in a single representative has the permanence of an instinct. Few escape it, few are conscious of its controlling influence. The danger always is that loyalty to the man shall insensibly replace loyalty to the thing he is supposed to represent, till at last the question *what* he represents fades wholly out of mind. The love of victory as a good in itself is also a powerful ingredient in the temperament of most men. Forty odd years ago it would have been hard to find a man, no matter how wicked he may have believed the Mexican War to be, who could suppress a feeling of elation when the news of Buena Vista arrived. Never mind the principle involved, it was our side that won.

If the dangers and temptations of parties be such as I have indicated, and I do not think that I have overstated them, it is for the interest of the best men in both parties that there should be a neutral body, not large enough to form a party by itself, nay, which would lose its power for good if it attempted to form such a party, and yet large enough to moderate between both, and to make both more cautious in their choice of candidates

and in their connivance with evil practices. If the politicians must look after the parties, there should be somebody to look after the politicians, somebody to ask disagreeable questions and to utter uncomfortable truths ; somebody to make sure, if possible, before election, not only what, but whom the candidate, if elected, is going to represent. What to me is the saddest feature of our present methods is the pitfalls which they dig in the path of ambitious and able men who feel that they are fitted for a political career, that by character and training they could be of service to their country, yet who find every avenue closed to them unless at the sacrifice of the very independence which gives them a claim to what they seek. As in semi-barbarous times the sincerity of a converted Jew was tested by forcing him to swallow pork, so these are required to gulp without a wry face what is as nauseous to them. I would do all in my power to render such loathsome compliances unnecessary. The pity of it is that with our political methods the hand is of necessity subdued to what it works in. It has been proved, I think, that the old parties are not to be reformed from within. It is from without that the attempt must be made, and it is the Independents who must make it. If the attempt should fail, the failure of the experiment of democracy would inevitably follow.

But I do not believe that it will fail. The signs are all favorable. Already there are journals in every part of the country — journals, too, among the first in ability, circulation, and influence —

which refuse to wear the colors of party. Already the people have a chance of hearing the truth, and I think that they always gladly hear it. Our first aim should be, as it has been, the reform of our civil service, for that is the fruitful mother of all our ills. It is the most aristocratic system in the world, for it depends on personal favor and is the reward of personal service, and the power of the political boss is built up and maintained, like that of the mediæval robber baron, by his freehandedness in distributing the property of other people. From it is derived the notion that the public treasure is a fund to a share of which every one is entitled who by fraud or favor can get it, and from this again the absurd doctrine of rotation in office so that each may secure his proportion, and that the business of the nation may be carried on by a succession of apprentices who are dismissed just as they are getting an inkling of their trade to make room for others who are in due time to be turned loose on the world, passed masters in nothing but incompetence for any useful career. From this, too, has sprung the theory of the geographical allotment of patronage, as if ability were dependent, like wheat, upon the soil, and the more mischievous one that members of Congress must be residents of the district that elects them, a custom which has sometimes excluded men of proved ability, in the full vigor of their faculties and the ripeness of their experience, from the councils of the nation. All reforms seem slow and wearisome to their advocates, for these are commonly of that

ardent and imaginative temper which inaccurately foreshortens the distance and overlooks the difficulties between means and end. If we have not got all that we hoped from the present administration, we have perhaps got more than we had reason to expect, considering how widely spread are the roots of this evil, and what an inconvenient habit they have of sending up suckers in the most unexpected places. To cut off these does not extirpate, them. It is the parent tree that must go. It is much that we have compelled a discussion of the question from one end of the country to the other, for it cannot bear discussion, and I for one have so much faith in the good sense of the American people as to feel sure that discussion means victory. That the Independents are so heartily denounced by those who support and are supported by the system that has been gradually perfected during the last fifty years is an excellent symptom. We must not be impatient. Some of us can remember when those who are now the canonized saints of the party which restored the Union and abolished slavery were a forlorn hope of Mugwumps, the scorn of all practical politicians. Sydney Smith was fond of saying that the secret of happiness in life was to take short views, and in this he was but repeating the rule of the Greek and Roman poets, to live in every hour as if we were never to have another. But he who would be happy as a reformer must take long views, and into distances sometimes that baffle the most piercing vision.

Two great questions have been opened anew by the President: reduction of revenue, and the best means of effecting it, and these really resolve themselves into one, that of the war tariff. I say of the war tariff, because it is a mere electioneering device to call it a question of protection or free trade pure and simple. I shall barely allude to them as briefly as possible, for they will be amply discussed before the people by more competent men than I. I cannot help thinking that both are illustrations of the truth that it is a duty of statesmen to study tendencies and probable consequences much rather than figures, which can as easily be induced to fight impartially on both sides as the *condottieri* of four centuries ago. All that reasonable men contend for now is the reduction of the tariff in such a way as shall be least hurtful to existing interests, most helpful to the consumer, and, above all, as shall practically test the question whether we are better off when we get our raw material at the lowest possible prices. I think the advocates of protection have been unwise, and are beginning to see that they were unwise in shifting the ground of debate. They have set many people to asking whether robbing Peter to pay Paul be a method equally economical for both parties, and whether the bad policy of it be not all the more flagrant in proportion as the Peters are many and the Pauls few? Whether the Pauls of every variety be not inevitably forced into an alliance offensive and defensive against the Peters, and sometimes with very questionable people?

Whether if we are taxed for the payment of a bounty to the owner of a silver mine, we should not be equally taxed to make a present to the owner of wheat fields, cotton fields, tobacco fields, hay fields, which are the most productive gold mines of the country? Whether the case of protection be not like that of armored ships, requiring ever thicker plating as the artillery of competition is perfected? But the tendency of excessive protection which thoughtful men dread most is that it stimulates an unhealthy home competition, leading to over-production and to the disasters which are its tainted offspring; that it fosters over-population, and this of the most helpless class when thrown out of employment; that it engenders smuggling, false invoices, and other demoralizing practices; that the principle which is its root is the root also of Rings, and Syndicates, and Trusts, and all other such conspiracies for the artificial raising of profits in the interest of classes and minorities. I confess I cannot take a cheerful view of the future of that New England I love so well when her leading industries shall be gradually drawn to the South, as they infallibly will be, by the greater cheapness of labor there. It is not pleasant to hear that called the American system which has succeeded in abolishing our commercial marine. It is even less pleasant to hear it advocated as being for the interest of the laborer by men who imported cheaper labor till it was forbidden by law. The true American system is that which produces the best *men* by leaving them as much as possible to their own resources.

That protection has been the cause of our material prosperity is refuted by the passage I have already quoted from Burke. Though written when our farmers' wives and daughters did most of our spinning and weaving, one would take it for a choice flower of protection eloquence. We have prospered in spite of artificial obstacles that would have baffled a people less energetic and less pliant to opportunity. The so-called American system, the system, that is, of selfish exclusion and monopoly, is no invention of ours, but has been borrowed of the mediæval guilds. It has had nothing to do with the raising of wages, for these are always higher in countries where the demand for labor is greater than the supply. And if the measure of wages be their purchasing power, what does the workman gain, unless it be the pleasure of spending more money, under a system, which, if it pay more money in the hire of hands, enhances the prices of what that money will buy in more than equal proportion?

Of the surplus in the Treasury I will only say that it has already shown itself to be an invitation to every possible variety of wasteful expenditure and therefore of demoralizing jobbery, and that it has again revived those theories of grandmotherly government which led to our revolt from the mother country, are most hostile to the genius of our institutions, and soonest sap the energy and corrode the morals of a people.

It is through its politics, through its capacity for government, the noblest of all sciences, that a

nation proves its right to a place among the other beneficent forces of nature. For politics permeate more widely than any other force, and reach every one of us, soon or late, to teach or to debauch. We are confronted with new problems and new conditions. We and the population which is to solve them are very unlike that of fifty years ago. As I was walking not long ago in the Boston Public Garden, I saw two Irishmen looking at Ball's equestrian statue of Washington, and wondering who was the personage thus commemorated. I had been brought up among the still living traditions of Lexington, Concord, Bunker's Hill, and the siege of Boston. To these men Ireland was still their country, and America a place to get their daily bread. This put me upon thinking. What, then, is patriotism, and what its true value to a man? Was it merely an unreasoning and almost cat-like attachment to certain square miles of the earth's surface, made up in almost equal parts of lifelong association, hereditary tradition, and parochial prejudice? This is the narrowest and most provincial form, as it is also, perhaps, the strongest, of that passion or virtue, whichever we choose to call it. But did it not fulfil the essential condition of giving men an ideal outside themselves, which would awaken in them capacities for devotion and heroism that are deaf even to the penetrating cry of self? All the moral good of which patriotism is the fruitful mother, my two Irishmen had in abundant measure, and it had wrought in them marvels of fidelity and self-sacri-

fice which made me blush for the easier terms on which my own duties of the like kind were habitually fulfilled. Were they not daily pinching themselves that they might pay their tribute to the old hearthstone or the old cause three thousand miles away? If tears tingle our eyes when we read of the like loyalty in the clansmen of the attainted and exiled Lochiel, shall this leave us unmoved?

I laid the lesson to heart. I would, in my own way, be as faithful as they to what I believed to be the best interests of my country. Our politicians are so busy studying the local eddies of prejudice or interest that they allow the main channel of our national energies to be obstructed by dams for the grinding of private grist. Our leaders no longer lead, but are as skilful as Indians in following the faintest trail of public opinion. I find it generally admitted that our moral standard in politics has been lowered, and is every day going lower. Some attribute this to our want of a leisure class. It is to a book of the Apocrypha that we are indebted for the invention of the Man of Leisure.¹ But a leisure class without a definite object in life, and without generous aims, is a bane rather than a blessing. It would end in the weariness and cynical pessimism in which its great exemplar Ecclesiastes ended, without leaving us the gift which his genius left. What we want is an active class who will insist in season and out of season that we shall

¹ "The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure, and he that hath little business shall become wise." — *Ecclesiasticus* xxxviii. 24.

have a country whose greatness is measured, not only by its square miles, its number of yards woven, of hogs packed, of bushels of wheat raised, not only by its skill to feed and clothe the body, but also by its power to feed and clothe the soul ; a country which shall be as great morally as it is materially ; a country whose very name shall not only, as now it does, stir us as with the sound of a trumpet, but shall call out all that is best within us by offering us the radiant image of something better and nobler and more enduring than we, of something that shall fulfil our own thwarted aspiration, when we are but a handful of forgotten dust in the soil trodden by a race whom we shall have helped to make more worthy of their inheritance than we ourselves had the power, I might almost say the means, to be.

“OUR LITERATURE”

RESPONSE TO A TOAST AT THE BANQUET IN NEW YORK,
APRIL 30, 1889, GIVEN IN COMMEMORATION OF THE
HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF WASHINGTON'S INAUG-
URATION.

A NEEDFUL frugality, benignant alike to both the participants in human utterance, has limited the allowance of each speaker this evening to ten minutes. Cut in thicker slices, our little loaf of time would not suffice for all. This seems a meagre ration, but if we give to our life the Psalmist's measure of seventy years, and bear in mind the population of the globe, a little ciphering will show that no single man and brother is entitled even to so large a share of our attention as this. Moreover, how few are the men in any generation who could not deliver the message with which their good or evil genius has charged them in less than the sixth part of an hour.

On an occasion like this, a speaker lies more than usually open to the temptation of seeking the acceptable rather than the judicial word. And yet it is inevitable that public anniversaries, like those of private persons, should suggest self-criticism as well as self-satisfaction. I shall not listen for such suggestions, though I may not altogether conceal

that I am conscious of them. I am to speak for literature, and of our own as forming now a recognized part of it. This is not the place for critical balancing of what we have done or left undone in this field. An exaggerated estimate and, that indiscriminateness of praise which implies a fear to speak the truth, would be unworthy of myself or of you. I might indeed read over a list of names now, alas, carven on headstones, since it would be invidious to speak of the living. But the list would be short, and I could call few of the names great as the impartial years measure greatness. I shall prefer to assume that American literature was not worth speaking for at all if it were not quite able to speak for itself, as all others are expected to do.

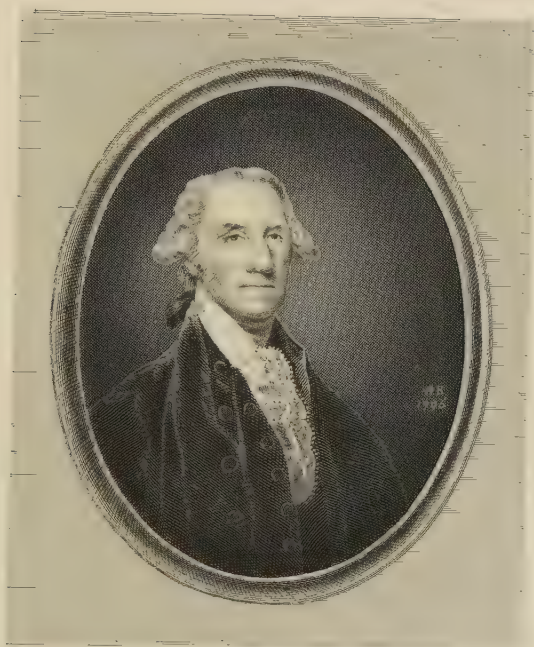
I think this a commemoration in which it is peculiarly fitting that literature should take part. For we are celebrating to-day our true birthday as a nation, the day when our consciousness of wider interests and larger possibilities began. All that went before was birth-throes. The day also recalls us to a sense of something to which we are too indifferent. I mean that historic continuity, which, as a factor in moulding national individuality, is not only powerful in itself, but cumulative in its operation. In one of these literature finds the soil, and in the other the climate, it needs. Without the stimulus of a national consciousness, no literature could have come into being; under the conditions in which we then were, none that was not parasitic and dependent. Without the continuity which slowly incorporates that consciousness in the

general life and thought, no literature could have acquired strength to detach itself and begin a life of its own. And here another thought suggested by the day comes to my mind. Since that precious and persuasive quality, style, may be exemplified as truly in a life as in a work of art, may not the character of the great man whose memory decorates this and all our days, in its dignity, its strength, its calm of passion restrained, its inviolable reserves, furnish a lesson which our literature may study to great advantage? And not our literature alone.

Scarcely had we become a nation when the only part of the Old World whose language we understood began to ask in various tones of despondency where was our literature. We could not improvise Virgils or Miltons, though we made an obliging effort to do it. Failing in this, we thought the question partly unfair and wholly disagreeable. And indeed it had never been put to several nations far older than we, and to which a *vates sacer* had been longer wanting. But, perhaps it was not altogether so ill-natured as it seemed, for, after all, a nation without a literature is imperfectly represented in the parliament of mankind. It implied, therefore, in our case the obligation of an illustrious blood.

With a language in compass and variety inferior to none that has ever been the instrument of human thought or passion or sentiment, we had inherited also the forms and precedents of a literature altogether worthy of it. But these forms and

Washington



precedents we were to adapt suddenly to novel conditions, themselves still in solution, tentative, formless, atom groping after atom, rather through blind instinct than with conscious purpose. Why wonder if our task proved as long as it was difficult? And it was all the more difficult that we were tempted to free ourselves from the form as well as from the spirit. And we had other notable hindrances. Our reading class was small, scattered thinly along the seaboard, and its wants were fully supplied from abroad, either by importation or piracy. Communication was tedious and costly. Our men of letters, or rather our men with a natural impulsion to a life of letters, were few and isolated, and I cannot recollect that isolation has produced anything in literature better than monkish chronicles, except a Latin hymn or two, and one precious book, the treasure of bruised spirits. Criticism there was none, and what assumed its function was half provincial self-conceit, half patriotic resolve to find swans in birds of quite another species. Above all, we had no capital toward which all the streams of moral and intellectual energy might converge to fill a reservoir on which all could draw. There were many careers open to ambition, all of them more tempting and more gainful than the making of books. Our people were of necessity largely intent on material ends, and our accessions from Europe tended to increase this predisposition. Considering all these things, it is a wonder that in these hundred years we should have produced any literature at all; a still greater

wonder that we have produced so much of which we may be honestly proud. Its English descent is and must always be manifest, but it is ever more and more informed with a new spirit, more and more trustful in the guidance of its own thought. But if we would have it become all that we would have it be, we must beware of judging it by a comparison with its own unripe self alone. We must not cuddle it into weakness or wilfulness by over-indulgence. It would be more profitable to think that we have as yet no literature in the highest sense than to insist that what we have should be judged by other than admitted standards, merely because it is ours. In these art matches we must not only expect but rejoice to be pitted against the doughtiest wrestlers, and the lightest-footed runners of all countries and of all times.

Literature has been put somewhat low on the list of toasts, doubtless in deference to necessity of arrangement, but perhaps the place assigned to it here may be taken as roughly indicating that which it occupies in the general estimation. And yet I venture to claim for it an influence, whether for good or evil, more durable and more widely operative than that exerted by any other form in which human genius has found expression. As the special distinction of man is speech, it should seem that there can be no higher achievement of civilized men, no proof more conclusive that they are civilized men, than the power of moulding words into such fair and noble forms as shall people the human mind forever with images that refine, con-

sole, and inspire. It is no vain superstition that has made the name of Homer sacred to all who love a bewitchingly simple and yet ideal picture of our human life in its doing and its suffering. And there are books which have kept alive and transmitted the spark of soul that has resuscitated nations. It is an old wives' tale that Virgil was a great magician, yet in that tale survives a witness of the influence which made him, through Dante, a main factor in the revival of Italy after the one had been eighteen and the other five centuries in their graves.

I am not insensible to the wonder and exhilaration of a material growth without example in rapidity and expansion, but I am also not insensible to the grave perils latent in any civilization which allows its chief energies and interests to be wholly absorbed in the pursuit of a mundane prosperity. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

I admire our energy, our enterprise, our inventiveness, our multiplicity of resource, no man more; but it is by less visibly remunerative virtues, I persist in thinking, that nations chiefly live and feel the higher meaning of their lives. Prosperous we may be in other ways, contented with more specious successes, but that nation is a mere horde supplying figures to the census which does not acknowledge a truer prosperity and a richer contentment in the things of the mind. Railways and

telegraphs reckoned by the thousand miles are excellent things in their way, but I doubt whether it be of their poles and sleepers that the rounds are made of that ladder by which men or nations scale the cliffs whose inspiring obstacle interposes itself between them and the fulfilment of their highest purpose and function.

The literature of a people should be the record of its joys and sorrows, its aspirations and its shortcomings, its wisdom and its folly, the confidant of its soul. We cannot say that our own as yet suffices us, but I believe that he who stands, a hundred years hence, where I am standing now, conscious that he speaks to the most powerful and prosperous community ever devised or developed by man, will speak of our literature with the assurance of one who beholds what we hope for and aspire after, become a reality and a possession forever.

GENERAL INDEX

- A. H. C. = A. H. Clough.
 Abana and Pharpar, **1**, 364.
 Abbott, *Shakespearian grammar*, **4**, 108 n.
 Abderite chorus in the *Andromeda*, **1**, 92.
 Abelard, Emerson before the Φ . B. K. compared to, **1**, 367.
 Abolition societies existed in Maryland and Virginia in 1790, **5**, 141.
 Abolitionists not the cause of the war, **5**, 203; their cardinal principle disunion, 204; *also*, **6**, 201.
 Abstract ideas, Hazlitt on, **4**, 85.
 Abundance of Chaucer and Langland, **3**, 331.
 Abuse unpleasant from inferiors, **1**, 226.
 Abuses to be protested against, **5**, 14.
 Academic town. *See* University town.
 Accent in Milton's verse, **4**, 109, 112.
Accidente, Italian imprecation, **1**, 172.
 Accuracy and Truth compared, **6**, 153.
 Acephali, **1**, 111.
 Achilles, chariot of, **1**, 152; a boy with an eel compared to, 217; *also*, **2**, 5.
 Acting, Italian, **1**, 175. *See also*, Stage.
 Adam in Paradise, White's Selborne the Journal of, **3**, 193.
 Adams, Charles Francis, on the attitude of America toward England in 1869, **3**, 253.
 Adams, John, J. Quincy's reminiscences of, **2**, 295.
 Adams, *Parson*. *See* Fielding, Henry.
 Addison, friendship with Dryden, **3**, 104; Pope's attack on, 178; answers an argument in favor of the Pretender, **4**, 26; Pope's lines on, 45; Pope's relations to, 52; his character, 53; *also*, **3**, 357, 363.
 on Italy, **1**, 127; on English poetry of the 18th century, **4**, 3; on the representation of common sense, the office of modern writers, 46.
Cato, Voltaire on, **4**, 17.
 Adhesiveness, the author's, **1**, 51.
 Adrian V., Pope, in the *Divine Comedy*, **4**, 240.
 Æschylus, his range narrow but deep, **1**, 365; **4**, 261; Atalanta in Corydon the theme of a lost drama, **2**, 126; like Shakespeare in his choice of epithets, **3**, 51; his imaginative power, **6**, 52; *also*, **2**, 138, 286; **3**, 45, 301.
 Agamemnon, the nurse, **3**, 54; *Prometheus*, 39, 57; *Seven against Thebes*, passage cited, 54.
 Æsthetic defects, connection with moral defects, **2**, 91.
 Æsthetics, Shakespeare's satire on the dogmatic variety, **3**, 55; its problems recur in Wordsworth's poetry, **4**, 357.
 Affliction a cooler of pride, Roger Williams on, **2**, 29.
 Africa, a little mystery still hangs over the interior of, **1**, 109.
 Agamemnon, **1**, 263.
 Agassiz, Louis, anecdote of his first lecture; **6**, 9; *also*, **3**, 240, 286; **6**, 149.
 Age, the respect for, diminishing, **6**, 137. *See also*, Old age; Antiquity.
 Agrippa, Cornelius, on Dante, **4**, 145; his visionary gardens, 397.
 Ague, Sir K. Digby's prescription for, **2**, 56.
 Air, on a winter morning, **3**, 283.
 Ajax, **2**, 172; **3**, 85.
 Akenside on winter, **3**, 266; his poetry characterized, 266; Spenser's influence upon, **4**, 352; *also*, **6**, 113. his *Pleasures of Imagination*, **2**, 143; **4**, 3.
 Alabama trouble, the relations between England and America caused by, **3**, 252.
 Alban mountain, **1**, 139; seen from Palestrina, 159.
 Albani, Villa, near Rome, **1**, 214.
 Alberti, Leandro, on Italy, **1**, 126.
 Alchemist visited by Edw. Howes, **2**, 46; Coleridge compared to, **6**, 70.

- Alchemy, John Winthrop, Jr., a student of, **2**, 46; Edw. Howes' letters on, 46; Jonathan Brewster's researches and correspondence with the younger Winthrop, 51; his reasons for secrecy, 55.
- Alciato ridiculed the evidence brought against witches, **2**, 383.
- Alcott, Bronson, his favorite word *dæmonic*, **1**, 87.
- Alderman, knighting of an, **1**, 193.
- Aldersgate St., London, Masson's description of, **4**, 71.
- Aleatico wine, **1**, 174.
- Alexander the Great, **2**, 135; Pope on, **4**, 44.
- Alexander, Emperor of Russia, member of the Med. Facs., **1**, 88.
- Alexandrines, **4**, 304; Dryden on, **3**, 136.
- Alexis and Dora*, **3**, 64.
- Alfieri, a copy bought by Keats, but unread, **1**, 239.
- Alfonso the Learned, **6**, 118.
- Alischans, Bataille d', referred to by Dante, **4**, 227 n.
- Allegory, defined, **3**, 362; the *Odyssey* the true type of, **4**, 321; as practised in Spenser's time, 324.
- of Gower, **3**, 330; of Dante, 362; **4**, 185 n, 209 n, 210; of Spenser, **3**, 362; **4**, 322, 326; of Bunyan, 322.
- Allibone, **1**, 816.
- Alliteration, Milton's use of, **4**, 97; in Spenser, 347.
- Allston, Washington, described, **1**, 72; judged as a painter, 75; T. G. Appleton on, 75; his work original, 76; anecdote of his early pictures, **3**, 108; his picture of Elijah in the Wilderness, **4**, 63; *also*, **6**, 151.
- Almanacs, one compiled by Emerson, imagined, **1**, 350; prophecies of, **5**, 125.
- Alph, the sacred river, **3**, 285.
- Alphonso of Castile, **3**, 24.
- Ambition, **2**, 17; character of, in Washington Allston, **1**, 77.
- America interesting only as a phenomenon, **1**, 49; **2**, 276; **3**, 244, 250; rapidity of its changes makes it interesting to the philosophic student, **1**, 52; foreigners uncomfortable in, because they find no peasants, 186; the country's heavy debt to the English Puritans, **2**, 13; its slight encouragement of art and high scholarship, 152; its history lacking in great associations and in interest, 273, 274, 276; English history belongs to it *de jure* but not *de facto*, 274; fame palpably a provincial thing, 276; every day coming nearer to Europe, 278; the traditions and significance of its past, **3**, 222, 246; a German beggar's dia-
- tribe on, 229; its democracy a menace to the old order, 232, 248; material prosperity a necessary foundation for ideal triumphs, 235; the Englishman's air of superiority in, 238; patronized by all Europeans, 239; Maurice Sand's caricature of, 240; anecdotes of the bad manners of foreigners in, 241; the earlier English downright aversion to, 243; the growth of the young giant made Europe uneasy, 244; examined by the sociologists, 245; Leigh Hunt on, 247; the advantages of easier communication with Europe, 249; the silent preparatory work done here not evident to foreigners, 250; accused of infecting Europe with democracy, **6**, 12; accused of sending storms to Europe, 12; its past without æsthetic stimulus, 140. *See also*, New England; United States.
- America, Spanish. *See* Spanish America.
- American ambassadors, **1**, 198; **5**, 240.
- American architecture, **1**, **6**, 198; no venerable buildings, **3**, 140.
- American biography necessarily provincial, **2**, 272.
- American boys, **1**, 50.
- American citizenship, its value depends upon the national existence, **5**, 49.
- American Civil War, the debt of its heroes to Emerson, **1**, 358; Carlyle's failure to understand it, **2**, 111; **3**, 247; compared with Frederick's wars, **2**, 111, 115; its material greatness boasted of, 282; the problems it has left behind, 282; the tender memories it has left, **3**, 221; English ill-mannered references to, 241; its influence on foreign opinion of America, 246; **5**, 210; its effect on the character of the nation, **3**, 249; **5**, 150, 182, 212, 246, 254; hailed with enthusiasm by the North, 75, 178; **6**, 188; the following reaction of despondency, **5**, 178; the great issues at stake, 89, 167; its probable effect on slavery (1861), 91; McClellan's Report from July, 1861, to Nov., 1862, 92-117; the campaign of the Peninsula, 95, 104, 106; the importance of saving Washington, 110; popular dissatisfaction at McClellan's delays, 110; Pollard's and Greeley's histories of, 132; its real cause the habit of concession on the part of the North, 146; the South fighting for what they believe to be their rights, 149; abolition of slavery its necessary result, 151; the nation to be the stronger and more united because of it, 152, 215, 234, 246; state of the war in 1864, 158; the change in its object

- and character, 167, 175; McClellan's views on its conduct, 168; a radical policy forced upon the Government by the rebels, 169; the just grounds of apprehension at its beginning, 179; its vast difficulties and contingencies, 180; the country's true war of independence, 192; abolition of slavery not the original object of the war, 196; efforts to confuse the public mind as to its origin, 201; the lessons it has taught Europe and ourselves, 210; loyalty and patriotism the only incentive of officers and soldiers, 211; the vices and meannesses of the people also brought to the surface, 212; great principles felt to be at stake in the war, 215, 251; for the first time in history an army knew for what it was fighting, 216; Moore's *Rebellion Record*, 246; slavery the original motive of the war on the part of the South, 247, 250; the deep meaning of the war as a moral phenomenon, 251; the thoughtlessness with which both sides entered upon it, 251; the newspaper rumors, 254; the fruits of victory, 256; watched with breathless interest by the world, 261; its deep moral issues instinctively recognized by the North, 312; our true enemy in the war, 316; essentially a war between two different nations, 316; the readiness of the young men to give themselves, 6, 155; saved us a country worth saving, 188.
- American civilization, the lack of permanence and stability, 1, 125, 199; the possible political and social development of, 3, 235; its shortcomings and possible future dangers, 251; the need of an increased number of highly cultivated men, 6, 171; danger of becoming absorbed in material prosperity, 227.
- American Colonies, the lack of unity and of great associations in their history, 2, 272; Burke's picture of their prosperous condition, 6, 202; due to a wise neglect on the part of the home government, 203; the silent but steady growth of a spirit of equality in, 204; their apprenticeship in democracy, 205.
- American criticism, 6, 225.
- American culture, Emerson made our thought independent of England, 1, 366; necessarily European in its standards, 2, 278; something more than labor-saving contrivances needed, 279; its provincialism, 279, 281; value of European criticism to, 283; the cultivation of the imagination necessary, 6, 94; *also*, 5, 309.
- American currency, musket balls current in early New England, 6, 82.
- American great men, their statues in the Capitol, 2, 280.
- American hotels, 1, 19; 2, 71.
- American humor cannot appeal to the whole nation, 2, 278.
- American Indians. *See* Indians.
- American land-companies, 1, 172.
- American life, its hurry, 1, 7; compared to a railway train, 49; its aimless luxury, 380; the novelist's complaint of, 2, 274; its disadvantages, 275; barren in the elements of the social picturesque, 284.
- American literature, likelihood of a future strength and flavor, 1, 113; the determination to produce one in the first half of 19th century, 2, 148, 153; a great poet expected from the West, 149; his possible character discussed, 150; the characteristics of a national poet, 151; Emerson, to some extent, typical, 151; the conditions for the development of a great poet still wanting, 152; originality and individuality not to be expected, 152; the demand for a literature proportioned to the size of the country, 153; a national satire or caricature still impossible, 278; effect of the Revolutionary War upon, 3, 307; Daniel's prophecy of, 4, 282.
- AMERICAN LITERATURE: reply to a toast Apr. 30, 1889, 6, 222-228; exaggerated praise to be avoided, 223; may learn a lesson from the life of Washington, 224; the early inquiries for, by the Old World, 224; its problem to adapt inherited forms to novel conditions, 225; the hindrances to its development, 225; to be criticised fearlessly if it is to become strong, 226; the promise of its future, 228.
- American mechanics, their supremacy, 6, 93.
- American military leaders compared with English, 5, 215.
- American newspapers. *See* Newspapers.
- American poet, the great, expected from the West, 2, 149.
- American political eloquence, 5, 49, 51.
- American politics and political conditions; national feeling hampered by our division into States, 2, 280; national feeling increased by the Civil War, 282; the problems left by the War, 282; the Federalists the only proper tories of, 301; every political evil leaves its taint, 3, 236; personality and narrowness of, 5, 19; constantly in a state of transition, 20; the Constitution to be bent back to

its original position, 35; the curse of perpetual concession, 36, 143, 146; 167; the absence of great questions in the half century before the Rebellion, 46; character and powers of the government, 48, 52, 63, 72, 147; value of our national existence, 49, 177; the advantages of the federal system, 61; the relations of the States to the central government not sufficiently dwelt upon, 63; the privileges dependent upon the broad extent of the government, 66; the administration made prominent at the cost of the government, 138; the preponderance of Southern influence, 142; the basis of representation in the South, 143; the principle of coercive authority recognized in framing the Constitution, 147; Jefferson's theory of strict construction, 148; Freedom to become the one absorbing interest of the whole people, 152; the strength of the government and people proved by the strain of the war, 182, 210; the general idea of party government, and of the subserviency of the executive, 184; the idea that statesmanship does not require training, 193; the administration represents the minority as well as the majority, 198; a profound common-sense the best guide of statesmanship, 205, 270; the willingness to endure taxation in order to carry on the war, 210; loyalty and patriotism the only incentive, 211; the life of the state felt in every member, 212; the people the true leaders in the conflict, 213; the United States the real country of poor men, 227; the advantages and disadvantages of universal suffrage, 232; 6, 30; the absence of an idle class, 5, 235; effect of the press and telegraph on the national sympathies, 243; the people slow to adopt measures of doubtful legality, 255; confusion of mind in regard to treason, 255; the war measures of doubtful legality justified by their results, 259; the worth of freedom discovered by the people, 261; public opinion a reserve of power to the magistrate, 262; the President's prerogative during the war and in ordinary times, 268; every inhabitant a subject as well as a citizen of the United States, 276; the attempt to climb into the White House by a back window, 293; the dignity of the Secretary of State a matter of national concern, 295; the will of the majority always constitutional, 298; general absence of the mob element,

301; the condition before the war compared to Germany, 316; democratic institutions inherited from England, 6, 15; the success of democracy, 24; the dangers of increasing wealth, 26; security of property, 26; succession of the Vice-President to the presidency, 46; the difficult problems of the time, 97, 175; the two great parties from 1867 to 1887, 183; the broom needed, 186; the need of continued patriotic devotion, 188; the weaknesses and perils of democracy, 195; abuses easily sloughed off, 195; the duty of examining the abuses, 199; the growth of bribery, 199; political corruption and trickery, 200; the Independent needed to denounce these abuses, 201; the conditions of our successful development, 201; the general satisfaction with our good luck and good government, 202, 207; the absence of shortsighted meddlesomeness of a paternal government, 203; the effects of free land and free trade, 203; the silent growth of the spirit of equality, 204; how long the Republic can endure, 207; the English rotten borough system revived among us, 207; the shortcomings of both parties, 210; the difficulty of arriving at their opinions, 211; the old parties not to be reformed from within, 213; the reform of the civil service to be our first aim, 214; the protective system, 216; the surplus, 218; the moral standard of our politics declining, 220; the need of active men to insist on moral questions, 221.

the People.—Foreigners easily assimilated if Protestant, 1, 115; the people not corrupt, 5, 138; their patriotism, 178; their active devotion to their institutions, 211; the dangers from the population of the great cities, 214; the American people an amalgam of many nations, 310; distrust of the judgment of the people, 314, 317; the change from an agricultural to a proletary population, 6, 10; the difficulties and dangers of assimilating a large foreign population, 11, 25, 97, 205; character of the people and of their political organization, 24; the people take their political duties lightly, 31; the population homogeneous and American at the close of the Revolution, 203; the respect for authority strong a century ago, 206; lack of political training in the average man, 207; the problem of our foreign population, 219. *See also*, Abolitionists; Civil service; Coercion; Congress;

- Cuba; Democracy; Democratic party; Emancipation; Embargo; Freedmen; Fugitive slave law; Immigration; Negro suffrage; President; Reconstruction; Republican party; Secession; Slavery; Squatter sovereignty; State rights; Suffrage; Tariff; United States.
- American public men, effect of frequent elections upon the character of our statesmen, 5, 19, 51, 137; the mistake of sending inferior men to Congress from the North, 135; the popular fallacy of the superiority of a man of low origin, 137; the alleged inferiority of Congress, 233; the character of Congressional oratory, 265; our highest offices filled by short-sighted politicians, 318; character of the framers of the Constitution, 6, 22; their solution of the practical question before them, 23; the statesman giving place to the politician, 198, 208; conditions of the production of great men, 209; the advancement of able men blocked by our political methods, 213.
- American railroads, 2, 71.
- American Revolution still regarded as an unhappy separation in Cambridge, 1, 56; French officers' opinions of America, 3, 240; its effect on American literature, 307; *also*, 5, 244.
- American scholarship formerly of the theological sort, 2, 153.
- American schools, their failure, 6, 170.
- American shipping, 6, 187.
- American soldiers, 2, 286. *See also*, American Civil War.
- American towns usually in the hobble-dehoy age, 1, 5.
- AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY, 5, 1-16; the apologue of the hermit who became a king applied to it, 1; its present position on slavery in the eyes of its founders, 2; it evades responsibility by appealing to its constitution, 2; character of its constitution examined, 3; the discussion of slavery not feared by its founders, 4; the condition that its publications shall "satisfy all Evangelical Christians" considered, 5; logical absurdities of the Society's position, 5; its position on moral questions in 1857, 6; the Society afraid to remind the owners of slaves of their moral obligations, 7, 9; the Resolutions of 1857 an attempt at compromise, 8; the inconsistency of the Society's position an occasion for scoffers, 11; its public responsibilities, 12; the division a healthy sign, 12; the anti-slavery question a moral, not a political, issue, 14.
- American village described, 1, 185.
- American yeomen, 1, 186.
- Americans, their enjoyment of antiquity, 1, 6; 6, 137; nomadic in religion, ideas, and morals, 1, 6; carry no household gods with them, 76; in what respect not Englishmen, 113; the peculiar charm of Italy to, 124; their attitude in England and France, 124; an accommodating and versatile people, 169; travel easily, 199; twitted with not distinguishing between *big* and *great*, 211; the influence of Puritan descent, 2, 14; their self-complacent pride of ancestry, 20; their dismay at having no national literature, 149; the habit of estimating greatness by material measures, 281; a certain advantage in their shiftiness, 286; sensitiveness to criticism, 3, 231; necessarily misunderstood by foreigners, 232, 250; deserve some of the sarcasm poured on them, 234, 251; what they have to learn in political matters, 235; accused of being vulgar, 236; their use of English, 237; the imitation of English manners, 238; as ostentatious *parvenus* in Europe, 240; supposed to abhor privacy, 241; anecdotes of their disregard of the rudeness of foreigners, 242; an Englishman on the cause of their hospitality, 243; what their country should be to them, 246, 251; continue to be treated as not grown up, 248, 252; the most common-schooled and the least cultivated people in the world, 250; not to be treated as counterfeit Britons, 253; fond of compromise, 5, 9; said to be less apt than others to profit by experience, 239; their alertness and vivacity, 245; their character as developed by the Civil War, 246; their small hands and feet, 310; bonds of sympathy with England, 6, 40, 50, 68; good nature of, 42; faith in their good qualities, 46; their habit of giving away money during their lifetime, 96; their zeal in celebrating anniversaries, 137; said to find their own country unendurable after living in Europe, 172; find themselves at home in no other country than their own, 204; the habit of acquiescing in make-shifts, 206; of necessity largely intent on material ends, 225. *See also*, American public men.
- Americanisms, 3, 237; 4, 347 n; 6, 184.
- Ames, Fisher, compared with Burke, 2, 275.
- Ammonius, 2, 360.
- Anabaptists in England in 1658, 2, 39.
- Anachronisms in the drama, 3, 68; in Lessing's dramas, 2, 226.

- Analogies between the inward and outward world, **4**, 166.
- Analysis, everything subjected to, at the present day, **1**, 109; escape from the evils of, 184.
- Anarchy, the right of, involved in the issues of the Civil War, **5**, 90.
- Ancients, more social than we, **3**, 261; their attitude toward life, **4**, 412.
- Ancients and moderns, **2**, 127.
- Anderson, Major, the first public officer to do his duty, **5**, 56; a court-martial suggested for him by the President, 69; his forbearance, 72; *also*, 78, 86.
- Anecdote, its value in history, **2**, 284.
- Angels, good and bad, Walburger on their power, **2**, 354; Dante on, **4**, 242 n.
- Angelico, Fra, **4**, 120.
- Anglicism, Dryden on, **3**, 130.
- Anglomania, **3**, 238; **5**, 181.
- Anglo-Norman mind in matters of business, **1**, 146. *See also*, English.
- Anglo-Norman poetry, theory that final and medial *e* was not sounded improved, **3**, 344.
- Anglo-Saxon. *See also*, Saxon.
- Anglo-Saxon element in English literature, **3**, 314.
- Anglo-Saxon literature, **3**, 320.
- Anglo-Saxon poetry essentially Scandinavian, **3**, 320; its homeliness, 335.
- Anglo-Saxons have deified work, **1**, 7; time precious in the sight of, 131; their character, **3**, 316; their religious instinct, 318; their sound political instinct, **5**, 218.
- Animal creation, its unchanging constitution, **3**, 195.
- Animals, their weather-wisdom, **3**, 198.
- Anio river, its waters once dammed at Tivoli to overthrow the Romans, **1**, 133; seen from Subiaco, 183.
- Annals, **5**, 121.
- Anniversaries, American liking for, **6**, 137; their suggestions of self-criticism and self-satisfaction, 222.
- Annual Register*, **5**, 241.
- Anthropology, its problems to be watched in America, **1**, 52.
- Antigone*. *See* Sophocles.
- Antinomian controversy in New England, **6**, 142.
- Antiquarians compared to ruminants, **3**, 47.
- Antiquity necessary to the growth of character, **1**, 6; a matter of comparison, 50; suspicions as to the value of discoveries, 211; the browsers among the vestiges of, **3**, 47; the American relish for, **6**, 137; the effect of geological discoveries on appreciation of, 138. *See also*, History; Past.
- Antony, St., of Padua, **1**, 110.
- Antwerp, Carlyle's etymology of, **2**, 116.
- Apemantus, Thoreau compared to, **1**, 369.
- Apicius, **2**, 248.
- Apollo a witness in the case of the Furies v. Orestes, **2**, 368 n; his power not in the girth of his biceps, **3**, 356; *also*, **4**, 403.
- Apostles, Milton on those who collected personal traditions of them, **4**, 63.
- Apostles of the Newness, **1**, 363. *See* Transcendental movement.
- Apostolical succession of English poetry, **4**, 105.
- Apostrophe, its use uncertain in early printing, **4**, 90.
- Apothecaries the victims of Satanic pranks, **2**, 363.
- Apparitions, origin of the belief in, **2**, 321; instances, 322; Lucian's opinion of, 322; ghosts in chains, 323; Hamlet's lines on, 326. *See also*, Haunted houses.
- Appenzell, democracy in, **6**, 21.
- Applause, the pulse of self plainly felt in, **1**, 57; of Emerson's speech on Burns described, 360.
- Apples at the grocery in Cambridge, **1**, 64.
- Apples of the tree of knowledge, nearly every one now plucked, **1**, 109.
- Apoplexy, **1**, 91.
- Appleton, Thomas G., on Washington Allston, **1**, 75.
- Application necessary to memory, **1**, 20.
- Appreciation, mutual, **2**, 219.
- Aqueduct near Tivoli, **1**, 130; of the Ponte Sant' Antonio, 140.
- Archaisms, when permissible, **4**, 347.
- Archer, Judge, in a witchcraft trial, **2**, 341.
- Architecture an element of patriotism and of culture, **1**, 7. *See also*, American architecture; Greek architecture; Roman churches.
- Architectural restoration, constructive criticism compared to, **6**, 121.
- Arctic regions, their icy privacy invaded, **1**, 112.
- Aretino, Leonardo. *See* Leonardo Aretino.

- Argument, Dryden's powers of, **3**, 110.
- Ariosto, and the Villa d' Este, **1**, 132; excelled by Spenser, **4**, 320; charm of his narrative, **6**, 64.
- Orlando* inspired Spenser's *Faery Queen*, **4**, 299; quoted, **4**, 328.
- Aristocracy, the principle implanted in human nature, **1**, 2; in Boston in earlier days, **2**, 290; represented by Josiah Quincy, **2**, 310; incompatible with democracy, **5**, 323; of New England in 18th century, **6**, 155; the management of public affairs in, **6**, 209.
- Aristophanes, **2**, 90, 106; **3**, 64; the highest type of pure comedy, **2**, 130; the *Frogs*, **3**, 50 n.
- Aristotle, Lessing's discussions of, **2**, 222; Dryden's lines on, **3**, 118; Dante on, **4**, 203 n; compared with Plato, **4**, 254; on moderation, **5**, 321; *also*, **2**, 174; **4**, 153 n, 155; **6**, 8, 165.
- Army personified in its leader, **5**, 92; a great leader its chief strength, **5**, 103.
- Army officers chosen by popular election, **6**, 30.
- Arno, River, **4**, 118.
- Arnold, Matthew, on Homeric metre, **1**, 291; on Shakespeare, **3**, 37; address as President of the Wordsworth society, **6**, 100; on education in France, **6**, 169.
- Merope*, its lack of vitality, **2**, 134.
- Aroux on cryptonyms in the Middle Ages, **4**, 136 n.
- Arrivabene on the date of Dante's birth, **4**, 121.
- Art, English race cares nothing for, **1**, 76; absorbed unconsciously, 113; George Sand on, 379; a principle of life its first requirement, **2**, 138; the basis of judgment in, **3**, 55; instinct for it absent in the Saxon character, **3**, 317; the conception and form united, **4**, 166; value of the study of, **6**, 93. *See also*, *Æsthetics*; Greek art; Literature; Painting; Sculpture.
- Art, ancient, difficulties in judging truly, **1**, 212.
- Art, literary, its value, **2**, 80; secures lowness of tone, 82.
- Art, works of, their life, **2**, 127; their principles immutable, but to be accommodated, 131; often contain more than the artist put there, **3**, 90.
- Art galleries, torments of Englishmen in, **4**, 12.
- Artephus quoted, **2**, 53.
- Arthur, King, legends of, **2**, 5, 359; **3**, 310, 320; **4**, 231; the vacant seat at the Round Table, 263.
- Arthur, Chester A., President of the United States, character of, **6**, 46.
- Artifice in literature, **2**, 121; **4**, 8; Pope its chief founder, 57.
- Artificiality of life, **4**, 32; illustrated by the effect of disguises, **1**, 78.
- Artillery-election days, **1**, 58.
- Artist, his character expressed in his eyes, **1**, 73; conditions of his work in America thirty years ago, 76; distinguished from the Moralists, **4**, 165.
- Artists, English, in Italy, **1**, 76; welcomed by Italian peasants, 176, 178.
- Artistic nature, Spenser's definition of, **4**, 313.
- Artistic sense wanting in Carlyle, **2**, 90.
- Ascham, Roger, on Italy, **1**, 125; **4**, 26; on care of language, **3**, 6.
- Aspiration the ideal of Christian life, **4**, 234.
- Assimilation, rapid, value of the power, **3**, 137 n.
- Associations, **3**, 223; their power felt in buildings and landscapes, **6**, 139.
- Assonance in Homer, **1**, 292; Milton's use of, **4**, 97.
- Assurance of faith, Captain Underhill's account of, **2**, 58.
- Assyrian inscriptions, **1**, 40.
- Astral spirits, **2**, 322 n.
- Athenæus, **2**, 292.
- Athenodorus and the haunted house, Pliny's story, **2**, 323.
- Athens, **2**, 278; its place in the world of thought, **6**, 174.
- Athens, American, political appropriateness of the name, **2**, 289.
- Atlanta, taking of, effect on Democratic politics, **5**, 161.
- Aubrey on the alleged transportation of witches, **2**, 354.
- Auchinleck on Cromwell, **4**, 73.
- Audience, Emerson's, described, **1**, 355.
- Augustine, St., Bishop of Hippo, his confessions, **2**, 261; on Rome, **4**, 241; Dante on, 181.
- Augustine, St., Archbp. of Canterbury, on sorceresses in the Alps, **2**, 360.
- Aureole seen in both summer and winter, **3**, 288.
- Ausonius, **3**, 306.
- Austria, the various classes in, in 1546, **6**, 14; taxation in, in 1546, 14 n.
- Austrian peasants, **6**, 14.
- Authority, **3**, 248; decline of reverence for it, **6**, 31; the respect for it a century ago, 206.
- Authors, their first appearance after publication of a book described, **1**, 250; lucky authors, 302; the reparation that time brings to obscure authors, 314; the pathos of obscurity, 316; their characteristics to be traced in their earliest works, **2**, 84;

- miseries of professional authorship, 193.
 Autobiography, sincerity and absence of self-consciousness necessary to, 2, 260; value of, 6, 91.
 Autocracy, 5, 193.
 Autumn, 3, 259.
 Autumn of the world's life, 1, 141.
 Autumn colors, 3, 222.
 Avalanches, 5, 31.
 Averages, Buckle's doctrine of, applied to the relief of beggars, 3, 226.
 Bacchus Sabazius, the origin of the witches' Sabbath, 2, 347.
 Bach, Sebastian, 1, 101.
 Background, want of, in America, 1, 113.
 Backwoodsmen. *See* Woodmen.
 Bacon, Francis, Lord, his definition of poetry, 2, 156; his language, 3, 12 n; distrusted English, 15; his times, 16; on wars, 6, 26; on reading, 90; on the ability of learned men in politics, 192.
 Ben Jonson on, 1, 360; 3, 16.
 Baden Revolution, 3, 227.
 Baggage, 1, 28; its safety in the Maine woods, 39.
 Bakála, Wallachian legend of, 6, 85.
 Balbo, his loose way of writing history, 4, 133 n; on Dante, 134; on the large number of MS. copies of the *Div. Com.* 143.
 Ballad poetry, Addison's praise of, 4, 3; Scottish, 268; of the 16th century, 275.
 Ballot. *See* Suffrage.
 Bancroft, George, as a teacher in Harvard College, 6, 156; his translation of Heeren, 157.
 Bandit hats, 1, 178.
 Banks, General, 3, 226.
 Bapson, Ebenezer, 2, 373.
 Barataria, 1, 72.
 Barber, his tripod an oracle of news, 1, 58.
 Barber's shop in Cambridge, 1, 61.
 Barberini Palace, in Palestrina, 1, 158.
 Barbour's *Brus*, 4, 269; quoted, 270.
 Barclay on Englishmen, 4, 12.
 Bargain-making in Italy, 1, 147, 149.
 Barlow, Joel, 2, 153; the *Columbiad*, 3, 306; 6, 64.
 Barmecide feasts of the Imagination, 1, 80.
 Barn-door, the picture seen through, 1, 186.
 Barnum, P. T., 1, 48; 2, 282; 3, 241.
Barnwell, George, a tragedy. *See* Lillo.
 Barrel-organ style of English poetry, 1, 245.
 Barrett, Mr., Mayor of Washington, 5, 62.
 Barter, the characteristic of one's dealings with strangers, 1, 20.
 Bartolommeo, Fra, 4, 120.
 Barton, Mrs., her confession of witchcraft, 2, 342.
 Batteux, Abbé, criticised by Lessing, 2, 199.
 Battles, Mrs., rules for whist, 3, 273.
 Battles and conquests of Old World, 2, 1; their real decisiveness, 5, 131.
 Battledoor and shuttlecock style of dialogue, 2, 137.
 Baxter believed in witchcraft, 2, 377; on the confession of witchcraft by a parson, 392.
 Bayle, Voltaire on, 4, 122.
 Beard not worn in old Cambridge days, 1, 90.
 Beards, English, 1, 199.
 Beatrice. *See* Dante.
 Beaucherk, Topham, 2, 236.
 Beaumont, Sir George, on Wordsworth's politics, 4, 367; his friendship with Wordsworth, 387.
 Beaumont and Fletcher, 2, 130.
Maid's Tragedy altered or "improved" by Waller, 3, 157 n; 4, 14; quoted, 22, 24.
 Beaupuis, General, Wordsworth intimate with, 4, 364.
 Beauty diminished by utilization, 1, 202; an Irishman's remark on what constitutes, 204; the highest kind of, 2, 300; beauty and use in literature, 4, 165; Dante on, 183 n. *See also*, *Æsthetics*; Art.
 Becker, W. A., 2, 135.
 Beecher, H. W., 5, 320.
 Beefsteak, fried, 1, 8.
 Beer, spruce and ginger, 1, 60.
 Beethoven, 1, 356; his symphonies, 4, 102.
 Beets, 1, 60.
 Befana, 2, 358.
 Beggars, anecdote of an exemplary bow from one, 1, 99; the romance of their life, 3, 225; their imaginary journeys, 225; their encouragement a sin against society, 226; proposal to imprison, 226; compared to unaddressed letters, 226; story of a German met on the Old Road, Cambridge, 227; his opinions on America, 228; the fatal effect of administering relief to the first one, 228.
 Italian, their howl, 1, 165; in Rome, 206; their assiduity in doing nothing, 207; their demand for protection, 208; their deformities, 209; the regular fee, 209. *See also*, Mendicancy.
 Bekker's *Bezauberte Welt*, 2, 11, 385.
 Belief in every age dependent on what men see, 2, 372; changes of, not sharply marked, 4, 194.

- Bell and Everett candidates in the Presidential election of 1860, **5**, 23, 25; their prime object to defeat the Republican ticket, 27, 35.
- Bell-founding, **3**, 15.
- Bellay, **4**, 316 n; on the introduction of new words, 346.
- Belmont, Augustus, speech at the Chicago convention in 1864, **5**, 156.
- Benedetto, San, Convent of, at Subiaco, **1**, 183.
- Benedictines, their hospitality, **1**, 144.
- Bennet, minister in Brightling, **2**, 394.
- Benvenuto da Imola on Dante, **4**, 138; appointed to lecture on Dante, 142; on the "second death" of Dante, 226.
- Beowulf, on travel, **1**, 44.
- Beppo, a rich beggar, **1**, 209.
- Béranger, **3**, 304; **4**, 266; **5**, 138; sentiment of, **2**, 252; compared to Horace, **3**, 305.
- Bergerac, Peire de, quotation, **3**, 310.
- Bernard, Governor, **6**, 151.
- Bernard de Ventadour, **3**, 303.
- Bernardin de St. Pierre; *Paul and Virginia*, **3**, 64.
- Bernini's angels on the Ponte Sant' Angelo, **1**, 190.
- Bertrand de Born, **3**, 303.
- Betham, Sir W., pedigree of Spenser, **4**, 296 n.
- Biagioli, commentator on Dante, **4**, 169 n.
- Bible, pronunciation of -ed in the Old Testament, **4**, 92; Dante familiar with, 212 n; its influence on the English language, 277 n; Wordsworth's better utterances compared to, 408; would be an incendiary book among slaves, **5**, 5.
- Bill of fare at the inn in Palestrina, **1**, 158.
- Bills of exchange invented by the Florentines, **4**, 118 n.
- Billingsgate, **4**, 269.
- Biography, its essential materials, **1**, 218; treatment of adverse criticism, **2**, 113; its main interest, 287; the filling, 295; undue length protested against, **4**, 58; the place of contemporary history in, 61; necessity of distinguishing between substantial personages and supernumeraries, 62; should give the sifted results, not the processes, of investigation, 62; Milton's remark on those who gathered up personal traditions of the Apostles applied to, 63; Wordsworth on the proper limits of, 392; value of, for reading, **6**, 91. *See also*, American biography; Autobiography.
- Birch, its place in education, **2**, 298.
- Birchen bark as an educational tonic, **1**, 263.
- Bird in the bush worth two in the hand, **1**, 111; **2**, 14.
- Bird of paradise, **1**, 112.
- Bird-nesting, **3**, 217.
- BIRDS (My Garden Acquaintance), **3**, 192-219; Gilbert White's observations on, 193; the author's *mémoires pour servir*, 198; weather-wisdom of birds, 198; their migrations, 199; their geographical partialities, 200; relations between different species, 205; sentimental in the pairing season, 208; most common in the neighborhood of man, 212; various bird-songs, 213; disappearance of certain birds from the neighborhood, 215; the pleasure in the company and friendship of birds, 218; seen in winter, 287.
- Special kinds, viz. —
- blackbird, European, **3**, 213.
- bluebird, **3**, 287.
- blue-jays, **3**, 288; driven away by robins, 206; accident in a nest of, 206; trapped in the snow-crust, 207.
- bobolink, **3**, 211; verses on, **1**, 55.
- catbirds, **3**, 201, 204; destroy the nest of some yellow-birds, 205.
- cedar-bird, **3**, 200.
- chickadee, **3**, 288.
- chip-bird, **3**, 214.
- chimney swallow. *See* Swift.
- cockatoo in the Cambridge barber's shop, **1**, 62.
- cross-bills, **3**, 199.
- crow as a lover, **3**, 209.
- crow-blackbird, **3**, 208.
- cuckoo, **3**, 214, 218.
- ducks, summer, **3**, 216.
- fish-hawk, **1**, 30.
- flicker, or yellow-hammer, **3**, 214.
- geese, wild, **3**, 199.
- golden robin. *See* Oriole.
- goldfinch, **3**, 213.
- grosbeak, rose-breasted, **3**, 200.
- hawk. *See* Hen-hawk; Night-hawk.
- hen-hawk, **3**, 215.
- herons, **3**, 216.
- house-martins, **3**, 193.
- humming-birds, **3**, 199, 210.
- indigo-bird, **3**, 213.
- king-bird, **3**, 200.
- kingfisher, **1**, 30; **3**, 216.
- larks on the road to Cavi, **1**, 163; Dante's lines on, 316; Dryden's and Jeremy Taylor's description of their flight, **3**, 121; the Troubadours compared to, 303; Pope's lines on, **4**, 30.
- linnets, **3**, 199.
- loons, **1**, 16.
- mavis, **3**, 201.
- night-hawk, **3**, 215.
- nightingales, **3**, 213; heard at Colonna, **1**, 156; at Subiaco, 183;

- Dunbar's lines on, **4**, 268; heard in Greece, **6**, 139.
 nuthatch, **3**, 287.
 oriole, **3**, 209, 213.
 owls, **3**, 215; Gilbert White's intimacy with, 194; a Persian poet on, **4**, 114; Wordsworth on, 372. *See also*, Screech-owl.
 pewees, **3**, 217.
 pigeon, wild, **3**, 215.
 pigeon-woodpecker. *See* Flicker.
 plover, stilted, Gilbert White's observations on, **3**, 194.
 quail, **3**, 214.
 raven, dedicated to Satan, **2**, 348.
 robin, **3**, 287; seen in winter, 200; his song, 200, 202; taste for fruit, 201; cunning and self-confidence, 203; presence in the garden, 203; drives away blue-jays, 206; and crow-blackbirds, 208.
 robin, golden. *See* Oriole.
 rooks, Gilbert White's observations on, **3**, 193.
 screech-owl, his cry, **3**, 203 n.
 snow-bird, **3**, 288.
 song-sparrow, **3**, 199.
 sparrows, **3**, 213.
 swallows, **1**, 185; **3**, 215.
 swifts, or chimney-swallows, **3**, 199, 215.
 thrush, brown, **3**, 204.
 thrush, Wilson's, **3**, 217, 218.
 woodcock, **3**, 217.
 woodpecker, golden-winged. *See* Flicker.
 yellow-birds annoyed by catbirds, **3**, 205.
 yellow-hammer. *See* Flicker.
 Birkenhead, wreck of, **3**, 238.
 Birkett, Mrs. Anne Wordsworth's first teacher, **4**, 358.
 Birmingham, **6**, 19.
 Birth, pride of. *See* Ancestry.
 Birthplace, its peculiar and inalienable virtue, **1**, 51.
 Bishop, Anne, witch, **2**, 340.
 Bishops, dumb, **1**, 110.
 Bismarck, Prince, **6**, 208.
 Blackburn the painter, **1**, 75.
 Blacklock, Dr., Latinisms of, **3**, 184.
 Blake, William, on Chaucer's characters, **3**, 358.
 Blanc, Mont, **1**, 48.
 Blank verse, **4**, 23, 112, 113; Dryden on, **3**, 137 n, 155; its difficulty, 157.
 Blocksberg, favorite place for witches' orgies, **2**, 352.
 Blokula, the place of meeting of Swedish witches, **2**, 353 n.
 Blondin, a suitable candidate for the Democrats in 1864, **5**, 157.
 Bloomer costume, **1**, 40.
 Bloomfield, **3**, 200.
 Bloomsbury, **3**, 239.
 Blue-jays. *See under* Birds.
 Bobbin-Boy, **3**, 226.
 Boccaccio, smoothness of his verse, **3**, 349; appointed lecturer on Dante, **4**, 142; his life of Dante untrustworthy, 191 n; on Dante, 121, 135 n, 138, 190 n, 222 n; on Cardinal Poggetto's desire to burn the bones of Dante, 141; *also*, **3**, 364; **4**, 160.
 Bodin on the witchcraft of Abel de la Rue, **2**, 338; on the identity of the Devil and Pan, 347; on the transportation of witches through the air, 353; on the fable of Circe, 360; on the torturing of witches, 379; justifies falsehood to a witch, 379; favors burning as the punishment of witchcraft, 380; on Wierus's work, 383; his unscrupulousness, 389; on the doings of evil spirits, 393; *also*, 361, 375.
 Bodmer, **2**, 218; publishes the *Nibelungen Lied*, **4**, 6.
 Body, the, compared to a lamp of finest clay, **1**, 73.
 Boethius, **4**, 181.
 Boëtius, **2**, 322.
 Böttiger supplied Goethe with facts, **3**, 47.
 Boileau, Keats on, **3**, 98; Dryden on, 99; his school critical not creative, **4**, 7.
 Bolingbroke, affected indifference to the world in his correspondence, **4**, 28; the St. John of Pope's gospel in the *Essay on Man*, 38.
 Bolivar, the "liberator of the world of Columbus," **2**, 283.
 Bologna, Dante's connection with, **4**, 154.
 Bolton, Edmund, on Daniel, **4**, 280 n.
 Bonaparte, Lucien, his *Charlemagne*, **6**, 64.
 Bonaparte, Napoleon. *See* Napoleon I.
 Bonhomme Richard. *See* Jones, Paul.
 Boniface VIII., Pope, in the *Divine Comedy*, **4**, 240, 245.
 Book collectors, **1**, 248.
 Book making the last refuge of the unhappy, **1**, 72.
 Book rarities, **1**, 248.
 Books, sacredness of, **1**, 250; Ireland's *Book-lover's Enchiridion*, **6**, 78; the comfort and friendship of, 79; the real world created by the imagination in them, 80; Wordsworth on, 80; the "good society" to be found in, 84; the wide range of character and subject, 85; the armories of human experience, 190; easier reading than some other kinds of printed matter, 192. *See also*, Literature; Reading; Old books.

- BOOKS AND LIBRARIES; address at Chelsea, 22 Dec., 1885, **6**, 78-98.
- Booths and shows at the Harvard Commencement, **1**, 79.
- Bordeaux wine, increased exportation of, **6**, 9.
- Bores, the fate of, **2**, 65; Nature's field of honest labor for, **3**, 256.
- Born, Bertrand de, **3**, 303.
- Borneil, Girard de, Dante on, **4**, 210 n.
- Bossuet, **3**, 185.
- Boston, the Common, **1**, 3; formerly the front door of America, 98; introduction of Cochituate water, 203; its wrangle with New York, **2**, 278; the character of its life and influence, 289; the vicinity of the College, 290; the changes in its life, 291; Josiah Quincy as mayor of, 303; its literary supremacy, **6**, 82.
- Boswell as unique hitherto as Shakespeare, **1**, 74; his desire to visit Rome, 123; rescued from obloquy by Carlyle, **2**, 87; kept company with Rousseau, 235; his letters to Temple, 261.
- Bosworth on the special virtues of Saxon, **3**, 15.
- Bottom, the Weaver, **3**, 319.
- Bouhours, Père, on German culture, **3**, 231.
- Bounties, **6**, 187.
- Bourdouloue, **6**, 14.
- "Bourgeois" applied to a want of propriety in diction, **3**, 125.
- Bouterwek on *Don Quixote*, **6**, 126.
- Bowing, Francis Sales' exquisite bow described, **1**, 98; three exemplary bows, 99.
- Bowles, Rev. W. L., **4**, 54.
- Bowyer, James, of Christ's Hospital, **6**, 163.
- Boyd, Henry, first translator of the *Divine Comedy* in English, **4**, 147.
- Boys, American, **1**, 50; public opinion of, true and discerning, 222; at play in the snow, **3**, 281.
- Bradshaw on Chaucer's doubtful productions, **3**, 296 n.
- Brahma, **1**, 350; **3**, 19.
- Brain, the supposed masculine and feminine lobes, **2**, 271.
- Bran, its prophets, **1**, 362.
- Brandellius and Mogusius, **2**, 201.
- Brandy and lager-beer, the Dutchman's distinction, **1**, 127.
- Bravos, **1**, 178.
- Breakfast in a hay-maker's camp, in northern Maine, **1**, 38.
- Breckinridge, John C., candidate for President in 1860, views of the Constitution, **4**, 24; his honesty, **5**, 35.
- Breeches, Roger Williams refuses to sell them to the Indians, **2**, 69.
- Breitinger, Gottsched on his *Art of Poetry*, **2**, 218.
- Brentford sceptre, **1**, 76.
- Brewer, the, in Cambridge, **1**, 60.
- Brewster, Jonathan, his alchemical researches and correspondence with the younger Winthrop, **2**, 51; his reasons for secrecy, 55; on the character of the New England state, **6**, 97.
- Bribery, its increase in American politics, **6**, 199.
- Brick blocks in Cambridgeport, **1**, 71.
- Bride of Corinth, **2**, 363.
- Bridge at Subiaco, **1**, 181.
- Brissotins, **4**, 355, 364.
- Britannia's trident, its advantages, **1**, 120.
- British. See English.
- Bronte, Charlotte—*Jane Eyre*, **4**, 377.
- Brook, seen under snow-drifts, **3**, 279; frost-work on, 285.
- Brook Farm, Emerson on, **1**, 357.
- Brooks, Phillips, contributions to Stanley Hall received through his hands, **6**, 49.
- Broome, his part in Pope's Homer, **1**, 267.
- Broomstick, origin of the stories of its use by witches, **2**, 356.
- Brossier, Martha, on trial for witchcraft in 1598, **2**, 393.
- Brother, as a title, **1**, 135.
- Brown hands, **1**, 186.
- Brown, Tom, **3**, 185 n.
- Browne, Sir Thomas, believed in witchcraft, **2**, 387; his language, **3**, 12 n; pronunciation of -ed, **4**, 92 n; also, **1**, 249, 381; **3**, 3; **4**, 105.
- Browne, Thomas, of Middlesex, accused of witchcraft, **2**, 332 n.
- Browne, William, **4**, 300; verses suggested by Spenser, 349 n.
- Browning, verses on St. Peter's, **1**, 200; his picture of an old king, **2**, 109; **6**, 27; his increasing mannerism, **2**, 121; on creative genius, **6**, 54; also, **4**, 369.
- Browning, Mrs., *Aurora Leigh* belongs to the physically intense school, **2**, 122.
- Browsing, Johnson and Lessing both fond of, **2**, 191.
- Bruce, Latinisms of, **3**, 184.
- Brunelleschi, **4**, 119.
- Brunswick, Duke of, appoints Lessing librarian, **2**, 207.
- Bryant, poem on the Embargo, **2**, 301; his style compared with Milton's, **4**, 86.
- Bryskett, Lodowick, on Spenser, **4**, 292 n.
- Buchan, Lord, **1**, 133.
- Buchanan, President, his administration, **5**, 43; his theory of *laissez-faire*, 47, 56; his fatal indecision, 56; his correspondence with the South Carolina commissioners, 69;

- his cabinet, 81; *also*, 4, 78; 5, 41, 62, 291, 297.
- Buckingham, Duke of. *See* Villiers, George.
- Buckle on Burke, 2, 233; doctrine of averages, 3, 226; theory on the advance of mankind, 4, 254; his historical method, 5, 124.
- Buddhist ceremonies, traces of in the Roman Church, 1, 200.
- Bürger, *Pfarrer's Tochter*, possibly suggested Wordsworth's *Thorn*, 4, 380.
- Buffalo, Romish priests compared to, 1, 154.
- Building-lots, 1, 71.
- Bull, Jeremiah, 2, 64.
- Buncombe oratory, 5, 49.
- Bunker Hill, 1, 3.
- Bunyan compared with Spenser as to allegory, 4, 322; the secret of his power, 322; *also*, 2, 286; 3, 318; 4, 117.
- Burgoyne, General, his soldiers quartered in Massachusetts Hall, 1, 56.
- Burke, Edmund, his prose, 1, 246; his generosity of "communication," 371; the imagination in his works, 2, 81; Lessing's debt to, 225 n; a sentimentalist, 233; the character of his political wisdom, 234; his hatred of Rousseau, 234; an inspired snob, 236; his style, 3, 130; influence of his writings, 6, 79; statesmanship shown in his writings and speeches, 197; harmonious working of his understanding and his imagination, 197; *also*, 4, 80; 6, 12.
- compared with Fisher Ames, 2, 275; with Dryden, 3, 100; with Milton in political wisdom, 4, 81; with Dr. Johnson, 6, 197.
- on Rousseau, 2, 232; on Sheridan, 3, 121; on the condition of the American Colonies, 6, 202.
- Buckle on, 2, 233; Wordsworth on, 3, 104; 4, 366; Johnson on, 6, 71.
- Burleigh, Lord, hostile to Spenser, 4, 290; Spenser's allusions to, 291; *also*, 4, 317, 325.
- Burlington, Lord, Pope's letter to, 4, 53.
- Burnet, Dryden's lines on, 3, 178.
- Burns, Anthony, 5, 69.
- Burns, Robert, Emerson's speech on, at the Centenary dinner, 1, 359; his sufferings from his biographers, 2, 162; on snow, 3, 279; influence on Wordsworth, 4, 369; *also*, 2, 206, 242; 3, 304; 4, 270.
- Busby, Dr., 1, 264; 2, 106.
- Business prevents crankiness, 2, 9.
- Bussy-Rabutin, 4, 287; on winter in the country, 3, 262.
- Butcher without his coat, arrested for contempt of court, 1, 66.
- Buti, on the date of Dante's birth, 4, 198 n; on Dante, 206; on Dante's "second death," 225.
- Butler, Samuel, on poetical composition, 4, 25; Dryden on, 3, 138 n; Coleridge on *Hudibras*, 6, 72.
- Butterfly, Spenser's verses on, 4, 310.
- Buttman's Greek grammar translated by Everett, 6, 156.
- Byron compared with Wordsworth and Keats, 1, 242; his influence traced on J. G. Percival, 2, 144; Moore's connection with, 238; his admiration for Pope, 4, 55; his replies to Bowles, 55; Spenser's influence upon, 352; *also*, 2, 120, 155, 237; 3, 179, 262; 4, 54, 371, 378.
- on the sea, 1, 100; on the falls of Terni, 129; on Rome, 189; on execution as a test of merit, 4, 42; on Wordsworth, 388; on Fielding, 6, 64.
- C — = Andrew Craigie.
- Cabalists, 3, 3.
- Cactus, 4, 172.
- Cæsar both a writer and a warrior, 2, 286.
- Calderon, fondness for similes and conceits, 1, 103; drama on Theophilus, 2, 331; Dryden's *Evening Love* taken from, 3, 149; retains always a provincial accent, 6, 108; his dramatic power, 116; passage cited, 3, 53 n; *also*, 3, 65; 4, 166; 6, 72, 115.
- Calendar of Roman beggars, 1, 207.
- California, 3, 240.
- Californian, met in a tavern at Passawampscot, 1, 188.
- Calling names, 5, 306.
- Calm at sea, 1, 101.
- Calvin, Rousseau trained in the school of, 2, 245; on monarchy, 4, 151.
- Calvinism, its effect on the character, 2, 270.
- CAMBRIDGE THIRTY YEARS AGO, 1, 43-99; its characteristics and appearance, 53; still a village, 53, 55; 3, 220; the New Road, 1, 54; the trees and churches, 54; the Charles, 54; the Old Road and its horse-chestnuts, 54; 3, 224; the Common, 1, 56; its special peculiarities not yet gone, 58; institutions more established, 58; Newman, the white-washer, 59; Lewis, the brewer, 60; the barber's shop, 61; the two groceries, 63; the town constables, 64; the two Scotch gardeners, 65; the old court-house, 66; the twin Snows, the oyster men, 66; the sloop Harvard, 68; the Port, 70; the Muster and the Cornwallis, 77; Commencement day, 79; its street lamps, 3, 224;

- the best spot on the habitable globe, 252. *See also*, Harvard College.
- Cambridge Synod of 1679, 2, 12.
- Cambridge University, England, Dryden on, 3, 106; the spell of its venerable associations, 6, 139.
- Cambridgeport, a great caravansary rather than a suburb, 1, 70; the marshes bought by Rufus Davenport, 71.
- Camenz, Lessing at school in, 2, 182.
- Cameronianism, 2, 73.
- Campagna, view of, 1, 139; seen at sunset, 145; railroads out of harmony with, 151; seen from the road to Cavi, 162; Gervinus on Shakespeare, likened to its underground caverns, 2, 163.
- Campaldino, battle of, Dante present at, 4, 127.
- Campbell, 3, 144 n; on Pope, 4, 54.
- Campion, Thomas, 4, 277.
- Canada, the journals recommend strict neutrality in 1861, 5, 87.
- Canker-worms, 1, 89; 3, 209.
- Canoes called birches on the Maine lakes, 1, 24; the felidæ of watercraft, 33; experiences in a leaky canoe, 35.
- Cant defined, 2, 97.
- Canti on Dante, 4, 155.
- Capitals, American, not truly so, 2, 285.
- Captain, Dutch, L.'s story of, 1, 119.
- Caractacus*. *See* Mason, William.
- Carbery, Countess of, Jeremy Taylor's description of, 4, 47.
- Cardinal and his attendants, a bow returned by them, 1, 99, 208.
- Caricature, the truth in, 3, 231.
- CARLYLE, THOMAS, 2, 77-119; gave the immediate impulse to the transcendental movement, 1, 361; his true connection with it, 363; the herald of the decease of Scotch Presbyterianism, 364, and the embodiment of its spirit, 365; compared with Emerson in the character and result of his teaching, 367; possibility of arriving at a just estimate of him, 2, 84; the bent of his mind illustrated by his early critical essays, 85; his sympathetic appreciation of character, 86; his critical method, 87, 89; his humor ends in cynicism, 88, 89; Richter's influence upon, 88; tendency to confound the moral with the æsthetic standard, 89; his lack of artistic sense, 90; his faults of style and thought traced to their root in character, 91; his position as a moral and political philosopher, 91; his sentimentalism and love of the picturesque, 92; seeks his ideal in individuals rather than in the race, 92; his Hero-cure, 92; his treatment by Cromwell or Friedrich imagined, 94; the dominie spirit continually more obtrusive in his writings, 94; the increasing extravagance of his hero-worship, 95; his remedy for the World's failure to call for Hercules, 96; has only repeated himself since *Sartor Resartus*, 96; his cynicism, 97, 103; his limitations as an historian, 99; his epical treatment of history, 99; the vividness of his pictures, 99, 102, 118; his lack of comprehensiveness, 99; his want of impartiality, 100; narrative wearisome to him, 101, 118; his accuracy of observation and description, 102; his demand of blind hero-worship, 105; the cudgel theory of divine government, 105; the intensity of his convictions, 106; decline of sincerity caused by the struggle for novelty, 108; his teaching, the "literature of despair," 109; his choice of Friedrich as a hero, 110; his lack of historic insight, 111; the character of his passion for truth, 113; his skill in winning sympathy for a character, 115; a great poet in all but rhythm, 117; his belief in brute force, 117; his loyalty to reality, 118; his value as an inspirer and awakener, 118; his influence second only to Wordsworth's, 119; his power of pictorial narration, 4, 65; leads the reaction against modern civilization, 5, 250; *also*, 4, 367; 5, 120, 123, 173.
- on the dissolution of Parliament in 1655, 2, 34; on Boswell, 87; on Dr. Francia, 95; on Edward Irving, 107; on America, 3, 234; 6, 26; on the Hohenzollerns, 3, 247; on the Civil War, 247; on Dante, 4, 164, 183 n, 205 n.
- Critical essays*, 2, 85, 88; — *Frederick the Great*, 99, 110-116, 187; — *French Revolution*, 89; — *Montaigne*, 85; — *Sartor Resartus*, 1, 361; 2, 88; — *Schiller*, 2, 116.
- Carnival, 1, 78.
- Carratella, a ride in, 1, 152.
- Carter, Miss, Wordsworth's fondness for her *Poem on Spring*, 4, 369.
- Cary, Henry, translation of the *Divine Comedy*, 4, 147.
- Cary, Jonathan, of Salem, 2, 394.
- Casella, 4, 125.
- Cass, Lewis, 5, 291.
- Caste in New England and Virginia, 2, 15.
- Castles in the air, 2, 93.
- Castor and Pollux of the oyster trade, 1, 67.

- Castriot, George, king of Epirus, **1**, 313.
- Cat at the inn in Palestrina, **1**, 161.
- Catacombs, guides in, **6**, 75.
- Catalogues, library, **6**, 83; the author's first of his library, **1**, 249.
- Catharine-wheels, South American republics compared to, **2**, 283.
- Catholicism. *See* Roman Catholicism.
- Cato, **5**, 127; advice in regard to companions, **6**, 86.
- Catullus, **3**, 305.
- Caudine yoke, **5**, 9.
- Cause and effect proportionate, **5**, 204.
- Cavalcanti, Guido, **2**, 80; **4**, 180.
- Cavalier and Puritan compared, **2**, 71.
- Cavi, the ride to, from Palestrina, **1**, 162; the streets of, 163.
- Cavi, Monte, its volcanic character, **1**, 140; seen from Olevano, 174.
- Cayenne, a place for red-peppery temperaments, **5**, 61.
- Cedars with gray moss, in the moonlight, **1**, 35.
- Celery, **1**, 59.
- Celibacy, **1**, 91.
- Cellini, Benvenuto, on autobiographies, **2**, 260; anecdote of his boyhood, **3**, 95; *also*, **4**, 124, 398.
- Ceremonial, **2**, 290; Philip II.'s ambassador on, 108.
- Certosa, **1**, 59.
- Cervantes, his humor, **1**, 278; **6**, 119, 129; his training, **2**, 90; his universality, **3**, 26; analysis of complex motives in, 57; on translation, **4**, 218 n; his optimism, **6**, 118; the father of the modern novel, 135; *also*, **2**, 169; **3**, 16.
- Don Quixote*, **6**, 115-136; its place in the affections of mankind, 117; the book thoroughly good-natured and good-humored, 118; the dedication to the Second Part, 119; compared with *Robinson Crusoe*, 119; its moral, 120, 123; its pathos, 120; *Don Quixote's* conception of his mission, 121; transcendental criticism applied to, 122; *Don Juan Valera's* objections to subtle interpretations, 122; Cervantes' purpose in writing the book, 123, 135; a satire on doctrinaire reformers, 123; the rescue of the boy Andrés, 125; the objects of his benevolence come back to his discomfiture, 125; Sancho the practical man, 125, 126, 129, 131; (**5**, 191); the liberation of the galley-slaves, 126; the characters, not realistic, but entirely lifelike, being idealized conceptions, 127; its humor, 129; the psychological truth of the hero's character, 130; the key of his character, 131; the island which Sancho is to govern, 132; conscience of *Don Quixote* and that of Sancho, 133; the adventure of the Fulling Mills, 133; character of Sancho, 133; the quality of the narrative, 134; the practical jokes played on *Don Quixote* resented by the reader, 134; Dulcinea, **4**, 209; Coleridge on, **6**, 126; Fitzgerald on, 135; *also*, **2**, 5; **5**, 104.
- Chain, lengthening the, a favorite figure with several poets, **3**, 136 n.
- Chairman, his privilege of speaking first, **6**, 181; his true office, 181.
- Chamisso; *Peter Schlemihl*, origin of the story, **2**, 368.
- Chance, **4**, 391 n.
- Change, perpetual, in the world around us, **6**, 7.
- Changelings, general belief in, **2**, 363.
- Chansons de Geste, **3**, 310. *See also*, Romances of Chivalry.
- Chapman, his long sentences, **1**, 217; effect of his translations on Keats, 224, 296; his diction and poetic depth, 277; his reverence for Homer, 290; a master of verse, 292; his description of a virtuous wife, **4**, 47; use of *nak't*, *saf't*, etc., 92; his spelling, 92 n; *also*, **1**, 279; **6**, 72.
- on the moon, **1**, 105; on his translation of Homer, 288; on pedantic translators, 290.
- Biron's Conspiracy and Tragedy*, **3**, 23 n; — *Homer*, reprinted in the "Library of old authors," **1**, 255; its merit, 290; the similes, 291; the character of the verse, 292; passages quoted and compared with Lord Derby's, 293; Hooper's edition, 287; the shortcomings of the editor, 296; the sea passages fine, 296; fine single phrases, 296; *also*, **3**, 275; *Odyssey* quoted, **4**, 90 n; Coleridge on, **1**, 287; Dryden on, **3**, 136; Keats on, **4**, 294.
- Character, it is cumulative, **1**, 6; from what it results, 219; Emerson's power a testimonial to the value of, 353; as rare as genius, and nobler, **2**, 171; Lessing on, 195; importance of, in a teacher of morals, 243; not concerned in a work of the highest genius, 257; valued above talent, 257; influence of surroundings upon, 277; influence of democracy on, 287; knowledge of it not gained by a too minute subdivision of ingredients, **4**, 62; its power in literature, 261; influenced by company and by reading, **6**, 86; a chief factor in the course of history, 91; its importance in the regeneration of society, 103; *also*, **3**, 188.
- Charing Cross, London, **3**, 252.

- Charity, **6**, 48; required in judging the doctrines of others, **2**, 395.
- Charlemagne, **2**, 110, 112.
- Charles I. of England, Marvell on, **4**, 70; Masson's description of, 70.
- Charles II. of England, **3**, 118; **4**, 70; on the English climate, **3**, 283; his French tastes, **4**, 11.
- Charles V., Emperor, **6**, 14.
- Charles XII. of Sweden, Pope on, **4**, 44.
- Charles Edward, the Young Pretender, the interest attaching to, **2**, 275.
- Charles River and its marshes, **1**, 54.
- Charleston, **2**, 289.
- Charlestown boys in Cambridge, **1**, 58.
- Charlton, Dr., Dryden's verses addressed to, **3**, 118.
- Charon, **1**, 156, 189.
- Chateaubriand, his sentimentalism, **1**, 100, 376; his attempts at suicide, **2**, 160; *also*, 237, 266, 271; **3**, 262. on desiring misfortune, **2**, 250; on Rousseau and Voltaire, 265; on Shakespeare, **3**, 63; on the wilderness, 212; on Dante, **4**, 144.
- Chatterton, Keats's sympathy for, **1**, 224; Wordsworth on, **4**, 4 n.
- CHAUCER, **3**, 291-366; the springtime freshness of his writings, 291; the absence of self-consciousness, 293; Occleve's portrait of him, 294; the few facts of his life, 294; describes himself in the Clerk of Oxford, 295; the doubtful poems, 296 n; the publications of the Chaucer Society and of other authors, 297; his indebtedness to earlier poets, 300; his insight into life, 301; his debt slight to the Provençal poets, 304; Norman influence seen in his work, 321; a scholar, thinker, and critic, 321; compared with Dante, 322; the true forerunner of Shakespeare, 324; his structural faculty, 324; a reformer without cynicism in literature and morals, 325; the English narrative poetry of his time, 325; his effect on the English language, 328, 335, 336; compared with Langland, 330; his literary sense, 331; the charm of his language, 335; his verse, 336; misapprehension of his verse by modern editors, 338; emendations necessary to restore his verse, 341; the theory that he did not sound final and medial *e* disproved, 343; follows the Roman *de la Rose* in this respect, 345; lack of uniformity in this, 347; his rule to be deduced from his musical verses, not from the halting ones, 349; his power as a narrative poet, 351; his pathetic passages, 352; his humor, 352, 364; his combination of energy with simplicity, 353; compared with Shakespeare as to the action of the imagination, 354; his simple love of nature, 355; the continuity and even power of his best tales, 355; his naturalness, 357, 361; his epithets, 357; his characters, 358, 364; his satire, 360, 174; his originality, 360; allegory not attractive to him, 363; the character of his work reviewed, 363; his personal character, 365; Pres. Kirkland's resemblance to, **1**, 84; a sceptic in regard to witchcraft, **2**, 381; his language, **3**, 12 n; his knowledge of Dante, **4**, 146; Spenser's master, 301; *also*, **2**, 105, 113; **3**, 64; **4**, 25, 155; **6**, 108; quoted, **3**, 261, 336, 366.
- on truth, **3**, 296; on inconstancy, **1**, 281.
- Dryden on, **3**, 180, 293; Gower on, 321; Coleridge on his verse, 340; William Blake on his characters, 358; Spenser on, 365.
- Canterbury Tales*, the device of connecting them an afterthought, **3**, 297; the six-text edition, 297; Aldine edition and Wright's edition, 343; their happily chosen plan, 364; *House of Fame*, 365; *Monk's Tale*, 321; *Romaunt of the Rose*, language of, 11; *Sir Thopas*, 321.
- Chaucer Society, **3**, 297, 343.
- Cheeriness of Francis Sales, **1**, 97.
- Cheese with power to turn men into beasts, **2**, 360.
- Cheever's *Accidence*, **2**, 299.
- Cheiron, his autobiography imagined, **2**, 261.
- Chelsea public library, address at the opening of, **6**, 78-98.
- Chesterfield, Lord, on Dante, **4**, 146.
- Chevy Chase*, **1**, 356.
- Chicago Convention of 1864, **5**, 155.
- Chidley, Mrs. Katherine, Masson's description of, **4**, 70.
- Child, F. J., his Chaucer studies, **3**, 298.
- Childhood, recollections of, **2**, 17.
- Children, all geniuses at first, **2**, 259; action of the imagination in, 319; effect of teaching by rote, **4**, 358; their natural healthy desires to be satisfied, **6**, 95.
- Chivalry of the South, **5**, 80; made real in the verses of the *trouvères*, 242.
- Choice of words, **1**, 245. *See also*, Diction.
- Chorus, Greek, its commonplaces, **2**, 137.
- Christ, Edw. Howes on the true idea of, **2**, 50; Dante on his relation to the Roman Empire, **4**, 152; brought, not peace, but a sword, **5**, 10; his

- true second coming heralded by the progress of democracy, 310; the first true democrat and the first true gentleman, 6, 21.
- Christian idea in literature, contrasted with the Pagan idea, 4, 234; embodied by Dante, 263.
- Christians, inconsistencies of, seized upon by scoffers, 5, 11.
- Christianity, intensifies self-consciousness, 2, 136; revolutionizes Art in the *Divina Commedia*, 4, 161; its history not concession, but aggression, 5, 10; its spirit characterized, 15; its power irresistible, 16; the gains of eighteen centuries, 22.
- Christmas, the customs and feelings of the season, 6, 181.
- Church, the, its discussions out of touch with the World, 2, 217; driven to maintain its power by arousing fear, 397; Dante's view of, 4, 244; the first organized democracy, 6, 14; Wordsworth's attitude toward, 106.
- Church and State, Dante's theory of, 4, 153, 173.
- Church of England. *See* England, Church of.
- Church-going in Italy, 1, 143.
- Churchwardens, 1, 177.
- Churchyards, desecration of, Webster's lines on, 1, 285.
- Churchill, an example of short-lived popularity, 2, 80; Cowper on, 80.
- Cibber, on the periwig, 3, 159; on Dryden's Rhodomontades, 174 n.
- Cicero, his twaddle about Greek literature and philosophy, 1, 100.
- Ciceroni in Italy, 1, 134.
- Cid, Song of the, 2, 152; 6, 116.
- Cigars, Prof. P.'s practice with regard to, 1, 93.
- Cimabue, 4, 118; Dante said to have been his pupil, 125.
- Cinchona, its properties made known by Sir K. Digby, 2, 56.
- Cintra, Convention of, Wordsworth's pamphlet on, 4, 389.
- Circe, Bodin on, 2, 360.
- City in winter, 3, 284.
- City and country, Cowper on, 3, 269.
- Cities, failure of universal suffrage in, 6, 11; democracy in small cities, 23; the dangers of, from ignorance and poverty, 25.
- Citizenship. *See* American citizenship.
- Civil service, the shortcomings of the spoils system and the absurd deductions from it, 6, 214; the abuses to be rooted out at their origin, 215.
- Civil war, an impartial history of, impossible, 5, 131; American ideas of, Civil War, American. *See* American Civil War.
- Civilization, the decay of, 5, 310; the means of its progress, 6, 172; its moral and its æsthetic elements, 173; the need of cultivated men, 174; literature as a mark of, 226. *See also*, American civilization; Culture; Progress; Society.
- Civilized man confronted with the forest solitudes and with his real self, 2, 5.
- Civita Vecchia, proposed railroad to, 1, 150; quarrel between an Italian landing and the custom-house officer, 168; the road from, to Rome, 189.
- Clark, Sir James, Keats's physician at Rome, 1, 239.
- Clarke, Charles Cowden, of Enfield, John Keats at his school, 1, 221; lent Keats Spenser, 223.
- Class legislation, 6, 175.
- Classic defined, 4, 266.
- Classics, superstitions attaching to, 2, 129; the debt of modern literature to, 3, 311; the study of, 6, 164; not properly "dead" languages, 165; *See also*, Greek; Latin.
- Classical antiquity not rated at its true value, 1, 212.
- "Classical" English recommended as a model by the older critics, 3, 96.
- Classical quotations, relish for, 2, 129.
- Claude, 3, 358.
- Claudian, Dryden on, 3, 180.
- Clearness necessary to good writing, 4, 55.
- Clergy of New England, 1, 85; 2, 291; 6, 144; in 17th and 18th centuries, 154.
- Clerk of the Weather, 3, 199.
- Cleveland, President, his ancestors, 6, 156; greeting to him at the Harvard anniversary, 180; a representative of Americanism, 184; his character, 185; his message on the tariff, 185, 186.
- Clio, her gossip, 2, 284.
- Clothes, 3, 244; ready-made, 1, 39; interpenetrated with the nature of their wearers, 95.
- Clothes of the soul, lines on, 1, 45.
- Clothes-line in the wind, Percival's blank verse compared to, 2, 142.
- Clotho, 1, 155.
- Clouds, 3, 314; at Subiaco, 1, 183; before a snow-storm, 3, 276.
- Cloud-shadows, 1, 174.
- Clough, A. H., on the atmosphere of Cambridge, 1, 53; at sea, 102; his true expression of the tendencies of his time, 2, 121; 3, 243.
- Clown in English and Spanish tragedy, 2, 131; his absence in America, 5, 245.

- Clytemnestra, likeness to Lady Macbeth, **3**, 51.
- Coach ride up the Seabasticook Valley, **1**, 9. *See also*, Stage-coach.
- Coarseness of the 18th century, **6**, 60.
- Cobham, Lord, letter to Pope, **3**, 188 n.
- Coddington, William, the Anabaptist Quaker, his account of Hugh Peter, **2**, 30; extracts from his tiresome correspondence with Winthrop, 63.
- Coercion, the exercise of legitimate authority, **5**, 53, 67; the theory of, in the Border States, 83; the right of, admitted by the framers of the Constitution, 147; McClellan's opinions on, 165.
- Coffee-houses, **3**, 263.
- Coffin, Gower's style compared to, **3**, 329.
- Coincidences, **5**, 126.
- Coke, Lord, **2**, 64.
- Cold, its demoralizing effect, **3**, 263.
- Coleridge, Hartley, **2**, 249.
- COLERIDGE, S. T.; address in Westminster Abbey, 7 May, 1885, **6**, 68-77; a faithful friend to his readers, 69; his metaphysics, 70; his critical power, 71; imagination constantly present in his work, 72; his poetry, 73, 75; charm of his diction, 74; compared with Dante, 75; his failings as a man, 76; his genius, 77; his fine metrical sense, **2**, 144; his view of religion, **3**, 187 n; familiar with the Inferno only of Dante's works, **4**, 147; a verse taken from Spenser, 303; his communistic dreams, 373 n; his friendship with Wordsworth, 376; his influence on Wordsworth, 408 n; his vaticinations, **5**, 125; his study of Greek literature, **6**, 166; *also*, **2**, 227, 249; **3**, 75, 137 n, 326; **4**, 54 n, 98 n, 343, 413; quoted, **4**, 260, 273; **6**, 74, 75.
- on Chapman's Homer, **1**, 287; on toleration, **2**, 216; on the impossibility of imitating Shakespeare's style, **3**, 37 n; on Shakespeare, 68; on Dryden's and Pope's satire, 179 n; on genius, 179 n; on translation, 181; on winter, 263; on the halo seen in winter, 288; on borrowing, 300; on English verse, 339; on Dante's Satan and Milton's Lucifer, **4**, 162; on Dante, 164; on Wordsworth, 373 n; on prose and poetry, 384; on Pascal, **6**, 75; on *Don Quixote*, 126; on unfamiliar names, 149; on Donne, 155.
- Scott on, **6**, 73.
- Ancient Mariner*, **4**, 377; **6**, 73; Wordsworth on, **4**, 404 n; — *Catullian Hendeconsyllabics*, 277; — *Christabel*, **6**, 76; — *The Friend*, **4**, 390; — *Wallenstein*, **6**, 72.
- College buildings, American, ugliness of, **1**, 6.
- College life, memories of, **2**, 305.
- College town. *See* University town.
- Collins, William, his harmony and classical elegance, **4**, 4; Spenser's influence upon, 352.
- Odes*, **4**, 3; — *Ode to Evening*, **3**, 223.
- Colonna, visit to its ruins, **1**, 155.
- Colonna family, stronghold of, in Olevano, **1**, 173.
- Color, appreciation of, **3**, 222.
- Colored soldiers, **5**, 126, 169.
- Columbus, **3**, 5; **6**, 16; did not make the United States his only object in discovering America, **2**, 283.
- Columbus, the great horse, **1**, 80.
- Comets, Dryden's lines on, **3**, 139.
- Commencement. *See* Harvard College — Commencement.
- Commerce, **2**, 289; distinguished from trade, 290; its debt to Florence, **4**, 118 n.
- Common sense, of the Puritans, **2**, 72; of Johnson and Lessing, 191; **6**, 197; imagination and, **3**, 270; **6**, 71; characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon, **3**, 316; **6**, 79; Addison on, **4**, 46; in American politics, **5**, 270; *also*, 113.
- Commonplace, the, **4**, 101; Spenser a standing protest against the tyranny of, 352.
- Commonplaces, **6**, 8.
- Communication, generosity of, **1**, 371.
- Communism, **6**, 35; rarity of the practical kind, **2**, 262; of Coleridge and Southey, **4**, 373 n.
- Comparative anatomy, Coleridge's criticism compared to, **6**, 72.
- Comparisons. *See* Similes.
- Compton, Bishop, **2**, 286.
- Compensations of Providence, **1**, 318.
- Composition, Wordsworth's and Keats's methods, **1**, 232.
- Compromise, of fatal augury where slavery is concerned, **5**, 8; compared to quack cements, 9; fostered in American politics by slavery, 20; impossible with rebels, 64; like Spalding's glue, 76; not to be considered in matters of honor and right, 160, 166; learned from the original conditions of the American government, **6**, 24; its place in politics, 24.
- Conceits, **1**, 303; **3**, 53.
- Concert of the spheres, an Italian guide's remarks upon, imagined, **1**, 141.
- Concord in 1775 the beginning of the Revolution, **5**, 88.
- Condescension, **1**, 186.
- CONDESCENSION IN FOREIGNERS, ON, **3**, 220-254.
- Confession, attended in order to ob-

- tain a certificate, **1**, 143; the Devil asks the privilege of, **2**, 366.
- Confessional, **1**, 197.
- Confiscation of property, **5**, 226.
- Congress, compared to a boy's debating-club, **5**, 19; the best men not sent to, from the North, 135; residence as a qualification for, 136; **6**, 214; speeches in, really addressed to the member's constituency, **5**, 265; *also*, **6**, 27.
- Congressional Globe, **4**, 300.
- Congreve, **3**, 150, 188; **4**, 19; on Dryden, **3**, 178, 191.
- Conscience, **5**, 129; the flaming sword of, 10; the good taste of the soul, **6**, 178.
- Conservatism, of Dante, **4**, 160; as shown by members of the American Tract Soc., **5**, 12; the result of holding office, 18; claimed by three American parties in 1860, 27; the result of ownership, 27; of democracies, 76; *also*, 30, 36, 42.
- Conservative temperaments, effect of progress on, **1**, 85.
- Consistency, instinct of, **4**, 368; commonly considered of more importance than statesmanship, **5**, 266.
- Consolation, commonplace its twin sister, **3**, 50.
- Conspicuousness, **2**, 59.
- Constables, **2**, 60, 61; of Cambridge, **1**, 64.
- Constantine, donation of, Dante on, **4**, 239.
- Constitution, men in good health unconscious of having, **5**, 5.
- Constitution, American. *See* United States — Constitution.
- Contemplation, Dante on, **4**, 210.
- Contemplative life, the path of the old Mystics to, **1**, 374.
- Contempt of court, not wearing one's coat a ground of arrest, **1**, 66.
- Continuity of character exemplified in Horatio, **3**, 80.
- Continuity, historic, its effect on national individuality, **6**, 223.
- Convents, instances of demoniac possession in, **2**, 371.
- Conventions of the "transcendental" times, **1**, 362.
- Conventional life, Pope its peculiar poet, **4**, 25.
- Conventional taste, **4**, 8.
- Conventionality, Protestants against the religion of, **5**, 250.
- Conventionalities, **5**, 192.
- Conversation, compared to a saw-mill, **1**, 3; the pendulum species of, 17; on the weather, 20; its proper measure, 43; at night over the fire on the hearth, 50; J. F.'s favorite topic Eternity, 90; on old times, 145; of the monologue variety, in Haydon's painting-room, 228. *See also*, Dialogue.
- Conversion, the American Tract Society's attitude toward, **5**, 6, 7.
- Conviction, **5**, 178; emotion mistaken for, **2**, 250.
- Cookery and good writing, their common principles, **3**, 119.
- Cooking, the saleratus period found on Moosehead Lake, **1**, 25.
- Cooper, J. F., **6**, 95; his conception of the poetic side of early American history, **2**, 5.
- Copley, Anthony, a passage of Shakespeare's traced to, **1**, 316.
- Copley, John Singleton, character of his painting, **1**, 76.
- Copperheads, **5**, 306.
- Corey's Hill seen at twilight, **3**, 221.
- Cornwallis, the, in Cambridge, **1**, 77.
- Corneille, **3**, 65; Voltaire on, 141.
- Cinna, **3**, 158; *Pertharite*, 147.
- Cornell, Ezra, anecdote of, **6**, 96.
- Correctness in literature, **2**, 223.
- Correspondence, **4**, 50.
- Cortona, **1**, 185.
- Coryate, Tom, brought the fork from Italy, **1**, 126.
- Cosmopolitanism, **1**, 375.
- Costume in the drama, **3**, 69, 70.
- Cottle, Mr., publisher of Wordsworth and Coleridge, **4**, 377.
- Cotton the single product of South Carolina, **5**, 58.
- Cotton, Charles, his style, **3**, 129; on winter, 265.
- Cough, Temple of, at Tivoli, **1**, 132.
- Count de Gabalis*, the sylphs in Pope's *Rape of the Lock* taken from, **4**, 32.
- Country, the idea of, **2**, 111.
- Country, love of, **2**, 112; **5**, 177. *See also*, Patriotism.
- Country charm of the literature of old times, **1**, 248.
- Country choirs, **1**, 11.
- Country dwellers, their meteorological ambitions, **3**, 196.
- couplets, **3**, 154, 156; Dryden on, 135, 137.
- Courage, **5**, 88; **6**, 185.
- Couriers, Englishmen the prey of, **1**, 124; their percentage on their employer's money, 149.
- Courts of law not infallible, **5**, 38.
- Courtesy, **2**, 310; its essentials found among Maine woodmen, **1**, 38; of the town-constable in Cambridge, 65.
- Courtier whose thighs leaked bran, **2**, 22.
- Cowley on solitude, **1**, 373; Dryden's opinion of, **3**, 119 n, 127; his faults, 127 n; a student of Spenser, **4**, 351; *also*, **2**, 79; **6**, 107.
- Cowper, his "taller thought," **1**, 64;

- his likeness to Rousseau, **2**, 266; his borrowing from Thomson, **3**, 269; the best of our descriptive poets, **270**; his style compared with Milton's, **4**, 86; influence on Wordsworth, 369; compared with Wordsworth, 399; *also*, **2**, 146; **3**, 192, 262, 335.
- on Churchill, **2**, 80; on Dryden, **3**, 190; on winter, 268, 270; on the country and the city, 269; on snow, 275; on Milton's prosody, **4**, 106.
- Homer*, **1**, 291; Coleridge on, 287; *The Winter Walk*, **3**, 268.
- Cox, Julian, her confession of witchcraft and trial, **2**, 341.
- Crabbe, **3**, 335; his descriptions of character, 359.
- Craigie, Andrew, of Cambridge, and his wife, **1**, 89.
- Craik, Professor, English etymologies of, **3**, 14 n.
- Crawford, the sculptor, his studio in Rome, **1**, 239 n.
- Creation parodied by artifice, **3**, 37.
- Creative faculty of Shakespeare, **1**, 278.
- Creative genius, Browning on, **6**, 54.
- Creative intellect, how distinguished, **3**, 332.
- Crébillon *fits*, **2**, 94.
- Credit, its invention by the Florentines, **4**, 118.
- Credulity, its different manifestations, **2**, 313; of the 17th century, 371.
- Creeds, their tendency to become dead formulas, **5**, 36.
- Crime, and sin, identical with Dante, **4**, 232 n; its punishment often delayed, **5**, 128; humanitarian view, **6**, 126.
- Critic, his position compared to that of an Italian guide, **1**, 141; compared to an alchemist, **2**, 55.
- Criticism, cruelty of, **1**, 225; in the eighteenth century, 246; its function to sweep away the false and impure, **2**, 123; Lessing on its method, 174; the rights of friendship in, 199; apt to reverse the miracle of the archangel's spear, 200; fixed principles not a help to production, 222; produces correctness but not taste, 223; modern criticism regards parts rather than wholes, 82; requires absence of prepossessions, and also certain fixed principles, **3**, 29; its standards still furnished by Greek literature, 34; comparison inappropriate in judging works of art, 55; destructive and productive criticism, 67; a wise scepticism needed, 83; its duty to look at all sides, and give judgment of the whole, 114, 332; its higher wisdom the capacity to admire, 140; the elements of a sound judgment, **4**, 355; want of a recognized standard, **6**, 63; the so-called constructive criticism, 121.
- Emerson's criticism, **1**, 354; Thoreau's lack of critical power, 369; Carlyle's method and aims, **2**, 86; Montaigne the first modern critic, 221; Leigh Hunt's method, **3**, 332; Coleridge's power, **6**, 71. *See also*, American criticism; English criticism; French criticism; German criticism.
- Crocodile, its generation described by Lepidus, **2**, 52.
- Cromwell, Oliver, Hugh Peter at his funeral, **2**, 30; Roger Williams's references to, 32; William Hooke's reference to his desire to retire to private life, 33; the dissolution of Parliament in 1655, 34; dissolution of the Rump Parliament in 1653, Haynes's account, 35; Maidstone's description of, 36; learned tolerance by the possession of power, 39; Hooke's account of his death, 40; his opinion of Carlyle imagined, 94; Dryden's stanzas on the death of, **3**, 109; verses addressed to, 116; his gentler qualities in Marvell's *Elegy*, 116; Auchinleck's saying on, **4**, 73; his policy toward Independents and Presbyterians, **5**, 173.
- on the Millennium, **2**, 31; on the disorders of the army in the West Indies in 1655, 36.
- Cromwell, Richard, his abilities described by Hooke, 40.
- Crowne, John, reminiscences of, in the *Gent. Magazine*, **3**, 133 n.
- Cruelty caused by religious differences, **2**, 374; caused by fear, 374.
- Crustacean natures, **1**, 85.
- Cuba, the proposal to purchase, **5**, 144.
- Cultists, **4**, 8.
- Culture, **2**, 166; its most precious property, **6**, 174. *See also*, American culture; Civilization.
- Cumberland, people of, **4**, 374.
- Cumber-minds, **4**, 89.
- Curculio in a plum, the priest in a diligence compared to, **1**, 150.
- Currency, American. *See* American currency.
- Currier's shop in Cambridgeport, **1**, 70.
- Curtis, George William, anecdote of, **6**, 96.
- Cushing, Caleb, **5**, 78, 91.
- Cushing, General, his fears of secession, **5**, 41.
- Cusk, **1**, 41.
- Custom, **6**, 107.
- Custom-house at Civita Vecchia, quarrel over the duty on a parrot, **1**, 168.
- Cynicism, the corruption of exuberant

- humor, **2**, 97; further characterized, 104.
- Daemonic, Alcott's favorite word, **1**, 87.
- Daisies on Keats's grave, **1**, 240.
- Damianus, Peter, **2**, 361.
- Damn*, as pronounced by the painful Mr. Perkins, **2**, 13.
- Dampier, Captain, on the natives of Timor, **3**, 30.
- Dampness at sea, **1**, 101.
- Dana, Chief Justice Francis, arrested a butcher for contempt of court, **1**, 66.
- Dana, Richard Henry, his first essays at navigation, **1**, 69.
- Dance of Death, Carlyle's view of life, **2**, 98.
- Dancing, the American Tract Society's attitude toward, **5**, 2, 5.
- Danger and opportunity, **5**, 63.
- Daniel, Samuel, his poetic style, **3**, 11; accent, **4**, 113; his language, 280; character of his verse, 281; quoted, **3**, 156; **4**, 281; **6**, 51.
- Bolton on, **4**, 280 n; Wordsworth on, 280 n.
- Civil Wars*, **4**, 281; — *Defence of Rhyme*, 282; — *To the Countess of Cumberland*, 282; — *Musophilus*, 181.
- Danish sagas, **3**, 313.
- DANTE, **4**, 118-264; the associations of Florence, 118; the bust of Dante in the Museum, 121; date of his birth, 121, 198 n; his ancestors, 122, 242; his horoscope, 123; his father's death, 123; his tutor Brunetto Latini, 123; his studies and wanderings, 124, 248 n; character of the time, 126; the few well-ascertained facts of Dante's life, 127; enrolled in a Florentine guild, 128, 167 n; the political factions of Florence, 129; Dante prior in 1300, 130, 180; his exile in 1302, 131; his subsequent wanderings, 132; his death at Ravenna, 136; his tomb, 136 n, 142; epitaph, 137; contemporary accounts of him, 138; the sorrow and labor of his life, 140; the feeling in Italy after his death, 141; lecturers on Dante appointed in several Italian cities, 142; French opinions of Dante, 144; German study of him, 145; English study of him, 146; his writings autobiographic and parts of a mutually related system, 148, 171; at once a clear-headed politician and a mystic, 149; his allusions to his exile, 150, 180; his politics, 150, 179, 216 n; his employment of Latin and Italian, 154 (**3**, 328); the theme of his writing righteousness, 154, 210; his knowledge of science, 155; his philosophy, 155, 168, 183; the first purely Christian poet, 159, 230, 263; his power of absorption and assimilation, 160; not a mere partisan, 160, 240; his consciousness of a divine mission, 160, 176; marks the transition between two ages, 161; his moral isolation, 162; the wide range of his influence, 163; his critics, 164; the imagination and the religious sentiment united, 166, 230; the poetic power always present, 167; the continued misunderstanding of his work, 168; the unity of his various works, 171; his character as shown in his works, 171; his logic, 172; his hatred of sin, 171, 176; believed in righteous anger, 178; and in a divine order in the universe, 178, 232 n; his lofty principle, 179; the chronology of his opinions, 179; his breadth of view, 182; his attitude toward philosophy, 183, 210; the stages of his intellectual and moral growth, 190, 214; the tales of his amours groundless, 190, 200; after the death of Beatrice he gives himself up to an active life, but is recalled by her to the contemplative, 192, 198; the Lady of the *Convito* and the Lady of the *Vita Nuova* reconciled, 193; another theory on the Beatrice of the *Purgatorio* and the *Vita Nuova*, 205; familiar with the Wisdom of Solomon and with the Scriptures, 212 n; and with French and Provençal poetry, 212 n; his prose style illustrated from the *Convito*, 213; his love of fame, 215 n; possibly present in Rome in 1300, 216; his studies in Paris, 222 n; the intense realism of his imagination, 223; his power of generalizing his special experience, 227; his relation to literature, 228; the creative faculty wanting in previous poetry, 228; character of previous sacred poetry, 230; the Christian idea contrasted with the Greek, 232; the freedom of the will the corner-stone of his system, 238, 244; his theory of society, 239; his orthodoxy, 244; makes exceptions to the absolute authority of the church, 245; his idea of God in relation to the heathen, 246, 184 n; his teaching compared with that of the Sufi's, 252; is led to faith by the unsatisfactoriness of knowledge, 254; his vision of the Divine, 256; the originality of his genius, 257; his view of man and nature, 258; the secret of his power, 258; his living influence, 262; his message, 263; a sunrise at sea compared to his style, **1**, 106; his story easily be-

lived in his own time, 111; his human forest suggested by the olive-trees near Tivoli, 139; the Sasso di Dante, 213; his boast that no word made him say what he did not wish, 295; his lines on the lark traced to Bernard de Ventadour, 316; his range narrow but deep, 365; his theories abstract, 2, 150; his fiery rain, 3, 278; his idealization of woman, 303; a passage translated by Chaucer, 343; his verse not uniform in elisions, etc., 347; 4, 107 n; his allegory, 3, 362; individual rather than self-conscious, 4, 116; appropriateness of his family arms, 167 n; Spenser familiar with, 290 n; the instinct of personification recognized by, 6, 105; *also*, 1, 376; 2, 104, 226; 3, 10, 25, 361; 4, 69, 78, 114; 6, 52, 142, 174, 227. compared with Chaucer, 3, 322; with Milton in the circumstances of his life, 4, 87; in character, 116; as to his work, 162; to the Hebrew prophets, 160, 176; with Spenser, 207 n; with Shakespeare as to subject, 263; with Coleridge, 6, 75. on the vulgar tongue, 3, 9 n; on expression and conception, 17; on in-decision of character, 76; on romances of chivalry, 309 n, 320; on the love of wisdom, 4, 125, 211; on his own wanderings, 133; on the delights of virtue, 172 n; on Boethius and Augustine, 181; on old age, 181; on the beautiful, 183 n; on his own greatness, 183 n; on philosophy, 184, 200; on the allegorical exposition of his poems, 185; on the allegory in the Gospel account of the three Marys at the tomb of Christ, 186; on the double use of the mind, 186; on the soul's relation to God, 188; on the nature of his love for Beatrice, 190; on the active and the contemplative life, 192, 200; on allegorical composition, 194; on Virgil, 197 n; on theology and the sciences, 201; on the pursuit of truth, 202; on Aristotle and Plato, 203; references to St. Paul, 203 n; on materialism, 205 n; on religion, 206; on Brunetto Latini, 208 n; on the outward beauty of his verses, 209; on contemplation, 210; on Girard de Bornéil, 210; on the soul's desire after good, 213; on Rome, 216 n; on translation, 218; on the double nature of man, 220; on the truly dead, 224; on the "second death," 226; on Guido Guinicelli, 229 n; on the relation between Pope and Emperor, 239; on the course of Roman history, 241; on the blessing of peace, 242; on angels, 242 n; on govern-

ment, 243; on liberty, 244; on the one God worshipped by the heathen under different names, 246; on prudence, 246; on the miracles of Roman history, 247; on the state of the heathen after death, 248; on the superiority of the wise to law, 252; on transubstantiation, 257; on the sword of Divine Justice, 5, 128.

Véricour on, 4, 128; Balbo's life of, 133 n, 134; Foscolo on, 134, 156; Boccaccio on, 135 n, 190 n, 222 n; his description of him, 139; Benvenuto da Imola on, 138; Villani's sketch of, 138; Ottimo Comento on, 139; Chateaubriand on, 144; Voltaire on, 144, 164; on the date of his birth, 122; Cornelius Agrippa on, 145; Goethe on, 145; Lord Chesterfield on, 146; Ruskin on, 147, 163; Cantù on, 155; Witte on, 157, 190 n; Rivarol on, 272; on his language, 162, 164; Lamennais on, 163; Schloesser on, 163; Carlyle on, 164, 183 n, 205 n; Coleridge on, 164; Ozanam on, 164, 222 n; Miss Rossetti on his style, 169 n; her comment, 173, 220, 222; Gabr. Rossetti on his exile, 170 n; Buti on his birth, 198 n; on his novitiate in a Franciscan convent, 206; Pietro di Dante on, 205, 227; V. LeClerc on, 212 n; Wegele on, 222 n; Ruth on, 228 n; Keats on, 312.

Beatrice, her marriage and death, 4, 127; in the *Vita Nuova*, 148; her subtle transformation in Dante's memory, 194; the process of her transformation, 197; her symbolism, 204; in the Purgatorio and the *Vita Nuova*, 205; the blending of reality and allegory, 206; her transfiguration begun in the last sonnet of the *Vita Nuova*, 217; *also*, 3, 302, 303; 4, 159, 185 n, 190, 192, 196, 342.

Convito, the authors quoted in, 4, 125; its subject, 154; the prose part later than the Canzoni, 193; his opinions develop in the mean time, 194, 196; explains his seeming inconsistency, 199; *also*, 157 n; quoted, 125, 133, 171-222 *passim*, 262.

Divina Commedia, the Inferno suggested by the prison at Palestrina, 1, 159; value of the *Convito* in illustration, 4, 155; date of composition, 156; its subject stated by Dante, 157; its interpretation, 157, 169, 170; its title, 158; its symbolism, 158; its subject broadly stated, 159; presents an image of the Middle Ages, 159; its scene the human soul, its fifth act the other world, 161, 237; its theme subjective, its treatment objective, 161; in spite of criticisms it remains one of the univer-

- sal books, 165; its living soul behind its many meanings, 171; its plan and aim, 174; the picture of hell, 175; the sufferers in the Inferno equally divided between the two parties, 180 n; God always the sun, 184 n; the pathos of the closing scenes of the Purgatorio, 207 n; occasional touches of humor, 208 n; the real Beatrice essential to its human sympathies, 209; the punishments of the Inferno perhaps suggested by the Wisdom of Solomon, 212 n; the conception first takes definite shape in his mind, 219; the allegory planned out, 221; its primary value as an autobiography, 223; the Other World not primarily a place of departed spirits, 224; begun in Latin, 235; its impartiality, 240; its central moral the truth of the incarnation, 256; its meaning, 258; its style, 259; immortality of the poem, 267; conclusion of the Paradiso, 6, 105.
- compared by Dr. Drake to Darwin's *Botanic Garden*, 4, 147; compared with *Paradise Lost*, 162; compared to a Gothic cathedral, 236.
- its many editions and translations, 4, 143; Landino's comment, 156; Longfellow's translation, 193 n.
- Sigier, 4, 172; Filippo Argenti, 177; the "donna gentil," 184 n, 195; Lucia, 184 n; the Lady of the Terrestrial Paradise, 195; Leah, 195; the wood obscure, 222; Frate Alberigo and Branca d'Oria, 225; Tristrem and Renoard of the Club, 226; the "second death," 225; Adrian V., 240; Boniface VIII., 240, 245; Bishop of Marseilles, 244; Mahomet, 244; Ephialtes, 247; Limbo, 248; Ripheus, 250; the inscription over the gate of Hell, 251; Antaeus, 260; Master Adam, 260.
- Special Passages*: — Inf. i. 117, 4, p. 225; ii. 94, p. 184 n; ii. 103, p. 217 n; viii. 40, p. 177; xv. 119, p. 208 n; xx. 30, p. 177 n; xxiv. 46-52 reproduced by Spenser, p. 332; xxxi. 136-138, p. 260 n; — Purg. i., 22, 27, 4, p. 186; iii. 34-44, p. 203; vi. 118, 119, p. 247; xvi. 106-112, p. 239; xvi. 142, p. 259 n; xviii. 46-48, p. 221 n; xix. 19-24, p. 349 n; xx. 52, p. 180 n; xx. 100-117, p. 247; xxiii. 121, 122, p. 224; xxvii. 94-105, p. 195; xxvii. 100-108, p. 192 n; xxvii. 139-142, p. 253; xxviii. 40-44, p. 195; xxix., xxx. compared with a passage in Spenser, p. 342; xxx. 115-138, p. 192; xxxi. 59; p. 191 n; xxxi. 103, 104, p. 196; xxxi. 123-126, p. 207; xxxii. 100-102, p. 196; — Parad. i. 70-75, 4, p. 257 n; ii. 7, p. 257; iii. 88, 89, p. 175 n; iv. 40-45, p. 175; iv. 124-132, p. 202; v. 115-118, p. 189 n; xii. 93, 94, p. 240 n; xiv. 96, p. 184 n; xvii. 55-60, p. 140; xvii. 69, p. 180; xix. 82-84, p. 249; xxvi. 107, 108, p. 210 n; xxvi. 134, p. 248 n.
- Letters*, 4, 156; letter to Henry VII., 134, 167 n; letter to the Florentines, 135; letter to the people of Italy, 152, 167 n; letter to Can Grande quoted, 168, 252.
- Minor Poems*, 4, 156; perfection of the Canzoni, 229.
- De Monarchia*, its date, 4, 150, 181; its argument, 150; Scholsser on, 152; condemned as heretical, 153; compared with Aristotle and Spinoza, 153 n; its language, 154; quoted, 220, 239-249, *passim*.
- Vita Nuova*, the aspiration at its close, 4, 140; its subject, 148; its importance to the understanding of Dante, 148; its date, 149, 216; the last two sonnets as they treat of Beatrice, 217; *also*, 180; quoted, 194. *See also above*, Beatrice.
- De Vulgari Eloquentia*, its text, 4, 153; its subject, 154; *also*, 3, 17 n; 4, 148, 182 n; quoted, 150, 181, 215 n.
- Dante, Jacopo di, redeems a portion of his father's property, 4, 136 n.
- Dante, Pietro di, on Dante's study of theology, 4, 205; on the "second death," 226; on Dante, 227; his comment one of the earliest, 227 n.
- Danton, Carlyle's picture of, 2, 89.
- Danyell, an Indian of royal blood, his necessities described by Fitz-John Winthrop, 2, 68.
- Darkness, the fancy active in, 1, 105; 2, 396.
- Darwin, Erasmus, the *Divina Commedia* compared to his *Botanic Garden* by Dr. Drake, 4, 147.
- Darwinism, 6, 23 n.
- Dates, as sold in the Cambridge groceries, 1, 64.
- Davenant, Will, 3, 64; taught Dryden to admire Shakespeare, 113; his *Gondibert* characterized, 138.
- Davenport, John, account of Hugh Peter, 2, 30; on God's wrath against the Quakers, 66.
- Davenport, Rufus, his investments in the Cambridgeport marshes, 1, 71.
- David on snow, 3, 275.
- Davies, Sir John, 3, 139 n.
- Davis, Jefferson, 5, 79, 306, 326.
- Daylight gives the supremest sense of solitude, 1, 105.
- Deacons, 1, 80; 6, 85.
- Dead languages, the classics improperly so called, 6, 165.
- Deane, Charles, 6, 146 n.
- Death, Keats on, 1, 237; Webster's

- lines on, 282; Petrarch's longings after, 2, 254; Josiah Quincy's remark on, 309; Dryden's lines on, 3, 168; Winter compared to, 258; Dante on the truly dead, 4, 224; his lines on the "second death," 225. *See also*, Dying.
- Death by lightning, J. F.'s feeling about, 1, 91.
- Debate of the Body and the Soul* cited, 1, 332.
- Declaration of Independence, 2, 75; Rousseau's influence in, 264; embodies Christianity in human laws, 5, 261.
- Decorum, public, 3, 152.
- Decorum in poetry, Milton on, 4, 2.
- Defeated commander, sympathy for, 5, 92.
- De Foe, in Pope's *Dunciad*, 4, 48; *Robinson Crusoe* compared with *Don Quixote*, 6, 119; quoted, 2, 323.
- Deformities, exhibited by beggars in Roman streets, 1, 209.
- Degeneracy in nature and man felt in middle life, 3, 284.
- Deipnosophists, 2, 135.
- Dekker, Thomas, his prosody, 4, 108; on Christ, the first true gentleman, 6, 21.
- De la Rue, Abel, his confession of witchcraft, 2, 334, 363.
- Delaware, importation of slaves into, forbidden in 1787, 5, 141.
- Delirium, Sir K. Digby's cure for, 2, 56.
- Delusions, the immortality of, 6, 91.
- Democracy, not the object of the founders of New England, 2, 3; the offspring of Puritanism, 13; 6, 15; its steady growth in New England, 2, 74; of the future, the ideal of manhood to be found in, 106; relation to poetry, 151; Rousseau its foster-father, 264; its influence on character, 287; its blunders, 311; its heavy roller does not flatten everything, 3, 222; one cause of foreign misunderstanding of America, 232, 235; in Holland, 234; its noblest development, 235; its significance when it can fight for an abstraction, 248; its dangers and responsibilities better appreciated, 249; public corruption the result of private evil, 4, 172; the responsibility of individual voters, 5, 18; 6, 209; hostile to Privilege, not to Property, 5, 27; 6, 11; duty of the people to form opinions on public questions, 5, 38; allegiance to the will of the majority its necessary basis, 47, 134; the question of self-protection, 64; conservatism of, 76; its power to suppress intestine dis-
- order to be vindicated in the Civil War, 90; importance of education in, 135; its strength in allowing every man to rise, 137; its failure prophesied at the opening of the American Civil War, 180; its strength and steadiness proved by the Civil War, 210; usurpation of power impossible, 214; the principle of extending the right of suffrage, 230; bound to be just to all, 261; the old fallacy of the tyranny of, 301; universal suffrage necessary, 303; its advance prepares the way for the second coming of Christ, 310.
- DEMOCRACY; inaugural address, Oct. 6, 1884, 6, 7-37; the author's experience of, 10; not hostile to property, 11; the common charge of American responsibility for, 12, 15; the ferment nothing new, 13, 16; first organized in the Church, 14; men beginning to know their opportunity and their power, 15; democracy in America inherited from England, 15; the development of democracy inevitable, 17; the customary charges against democracy, 20; democracy defined, 20, 33; a parable of Jellaladeen applied to, 21; modifications of a pure democracy required in a large country, 22; democracy as embodied in the American Constitution, 23; the experience of small cities unfavorable, 23; its success in America, 24; government by discussion and by majorities, 27; universal suffrage, 28; ductility to discipline somewhat lessened, 30; development of personal independence, 31; reverence for authority declining everywhere, 31; true worth appreciated in, 32; fosters respect for superior virtue, 32; importance of public opinion, 34; significance of Socialism in, 34; the good nature fostered by, 97; its weakness, to be satisfied with the second-best, 170; a failure unless it can produce the highest types as well as a high average, 172; its tendency to overestimate material success, 173; its unsettled problems, 175; the author's address at Birmingham, 193; the weaknesses and perils resulting from its abuse, 195; successful in America before its presence was observed, 205; the duties of individual citizens in, 209; *See also*, American politics; Equality.
- Democratic party, character in 1860, 5, 24; its position in the North in 1861, 78; its alliance with the Slave power, 144; its awkward position in 1864, 153; its candidates intended to offset each other, 154; the elements

- of the Chicago Convention, 155; the difficulties of constructing a platform, 157; its only proposal is surrender, 158; its attitude toward secession, 249; in 1866, 268; its contempt for the reasoning powers of the people, 284; in the Philadelphia Convention of 1866, 288; its responsibility for the Civil War, 6, 211.
- Demogorgon, 3, 290.
- Demoniac possession, the natural tendency toward, 2, 370.
- Demosthenes, 2, 241.
- Dennis, John, on Dryden, 3, 104, 190; as a critic, 190; on artifice, 4, 8; Pope's relation to, 50; *also*, 4, 17.
- Dentition, 2, 251.
- De Quincey, 3, 32; on Wordsworth, 1, 371, 394.
- Derby, Lord, his Homer quoted and compared with Chapman's, 1, 293; on the United States government, 5, 214.
- De Roos, Lord, convicted of cheating at cards, 5, 83.
- Description, Shakespeare's power in, 3, 42; the introduction of unmeaning particulars, 4, 74; Milton's power, 99.
- Descriptive poetry, 3, 261; 6, 74; Cowper's the best for every-day wear, 3, 270; diatribe on, 4, 272; Wordsworth's power, 372. *See also*, Narrative poetry.
- Desmond, Countess of, 4, 59.
- Despots, 6, 27.
- Despotisms, 6, 209.
- Devil, Mather on, 1, 257; our relations with in modern times, 2, 2. *See also*, Satan.
- Devils, the infernal hierarchy, 2, 327.
- Dexter, Maine, 1, 11.
- Dialogue, the battledoor and shuttlecock style, 2, 137. *See also*, Conversation.
- Diana, 2, 358.
- Diaries, importance of keeping, 2, 293.
- Diction, 1, 245; of Emerson, 351; of Coleridge, 6, 74; lack of propriety in, 3, 125.
- Diction and speech, 3, 14. *See also*, Choice of words; Style.
- Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*, imitates Cervantes, 6, 135.
- Diderot, Lessing's debt to, 2, 221, 224 n; on French poetry, 3, 162 n.
- Diet, its influence on the brain, 2, 389.
- Difficulty, made the tenth Muse by Voltaire, 4, 7.
- Digamma in the Sirens' lay, 1, 92.
- Digby, Sir Kenelm, his theory of association, 1, 1; sends curious prescriptions to J. Winthrop, Jr., 2, 56; seeks books for Harvard College, 57; his politics, 57; both a writer and a soldier, 286; on witchcraft, 387.
- Dignity of man, 1, 375.
- Dilettante the moral, 2, 253.
- Dilettantism, its beginning, 4, 160.
- Diligence from Tivoli to Rome, 1, 146, 149. *See also*, Stage-coach.
- Dilke quoted on Keats's betrothal, 1, 235.
- Dimmesdale, Mr., in Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, 2, 265.
- Dinner at the inn in Palestrina, 1, 159.
- Dinners, 2, 295.
- Diphilus the Labyrinth, 1, 363.
- Diplomacy, the principle of paper money in, 5, 293.
- Discipline as exercised by Pres. Kirkland, 1, 85.
- Discontent, wholesome, 1, 356; underlying all great poetry, 2, 150.
- Discussion, slavery has no claim to immunity from, 5, 13; the life of free institutions, 31.
- Disease, satisfaction of finding a long name for, 6, 13.
- Disputes of Italians, 1, 165.
- Disraeli, Isaac, 4, 54; his herbarium of Billingsgate, 2, 213.
- Distance estimated by one's feelings, 1, 28.
- Divine judgments made to work both ways, 2, 66.
- Divorce, Milton's demand for easier, 4, 115.
- Dixon, Hepworth, on the typical America, 3, 212.
- Dixon, James, servant of Wordsworth, 4, 354 n.
- Dobson, Austin, his life of Fielding, 6, 57.
- Doctrinaires in politics, 5, 189; 6, 193.
- Dodo, 1, 315.
- Dogs of the Palestrina inn, 1, 161.
- Domes generally look heavy, 1, 206.
- DON QUIXOTE; notes read at the Workingmen's College, 6, 115-136. For details, *see under* Cervantes.
- Donati, Corso, Dante's connection with, 4, 128; plunders Florence, 136 n.
- Doner, Lawrence, the Devil asks to be confessed by him, 2, 366.
- Donkey, his bray, 1, 156.
- Donkey driving, 1, 176.
- Donne, his Mistress Boulstred, 1, 229; his profoundness, 2, 160; wanting in the higher imagination, 3, 35; his *Relic*, 171; his verse, 348, 350; 4, 107 n; *also*, 1, 281, 381; 4, 21 n, 230; quoted, 6, 80, 140.
- Dryden on, 3, 171 n; Ben Jonson on, 6, 113; Coleridge on, 155.
- Doolittle, Mr., Chairman of the Philadelphia Convention, 5, 286.
- Doubt, 4, 204; Dante compares it to a sucker, 202. *See also*, Scepticism.

- Douglas, Gawain, his translation of the *Æneid*, **4**, 271.
- Douglas, Janet, her confession of witchcraft, **2**, 341.
- Douglas, Stephen A., candidate for Pres. in 1860, views of the Constitution, **5**, 24; his oratory, 194; Pres. Johnson's allusion to, 289; his character, 291; his canonization a common misfortune, 292.
- Downing, Emanuel, **2**, 24, 44, 48; letter to Winthrop on the necessity of obtaining slaves, 42.
- Downing, Sir George, **2**, 24, 30.
- Dragon, age of the, **1**, 108.
- Drake, Dr., compares the *Divina Commedia* to Darwin's *Botanic Garden*, **4**, 147.
- Drake, Sir Francis, **2**, 290.
- Drama, a growth, not a manufacture, **2**, 131; cultivation of character essential to a writer of, 195; the demand that all its parts must be in keeping, **3**, 69; anachronisms in, 70; the introduction of low characters and comic scenes in tragedy, 73; the moral office of tragedy, 88; it teaches by indirection, 88; difficulty of making a moral theory the object, **4**, 377. *See also*, English drama; French drama; Greek drama; Spanish drama.
- Dramatic poetry, the combination of qualities needed for, **1**, 279; distinguished from narrative, **3**, 351.
- Dramatic unity, Shakespeare's relation to, **3**, 65.
- Dramatists, Elizabethan, **1**, 277, 280; **4**, 369.
- Drayton, **3**, 11; shipwrecked by his choice of subjects, **4**, 279.
- Battle of Agincourt*, **3**, 142; *Mooncalf* cited, **2**, 362; *Nymphidia*, **4**, 49, 280; *Polyolbion* a versified gazetteer, 279; *To the Cambrio-Britons*, 280.
- Dreams, visit to Prester John on a giraffe, **1**, 24.
- Dresden, winter in, **3**, 267.
- Drive from Subiaco to Tivoli, **1**, 184.
- Drinking in the wine-shop of Rojate, **1**, 178; Thomas Shepard's letter on, to Winthrop, **2**, 42.
- Drowning, effect on the memory, **1**, 75.
- Drummond, of Hawthornden, **4**, 306; reprinted in the "Library of Old Authors," **1**, 252; quoted, **4**, 91.
- Drunkenness, Uncle Zeb's frequent potations, and his difficulties, **1**, 29; the Washington Corps, 88; of Lepidus in *Antony and Cleopatra*, **2**, 103.
- DRYDEN, **3**, 95-191; his position among English poets, 99; posterity has judged him by his best, 100; the first of the moderns, 101, 139; the character of his age, 101; his own character, 103; his acquaintance with earlier and later writers, 104; his father and family, 105; his reading when a boy, 105; education, 106; poet-laureate and historiographer, 106; marriage, 107; the style of his earliest verses, 107; studied the early poems of Milton, 109; his power of argument, 110; his best work in his old age, 112; the gradual quickening of his imagination, 113; the *sermo pedestris* his natural element, 113; his poetry at its best in translations, 114; compared to an ostrich, 115; early performances of the *obligato* sort, 116; his attitude towards the Restoration, 118; his first work of fine quality in 1663, 118; unevenness of his style, 120, 126; poetical beauty of his prose, 120; failings of his verse, 122, 144, 185; the development of his taste traced in his prefaces, 123; his memory for things, not words, 124 n; instances of "bourgeois" diction, 125; his prose style compared with that of others, 129; formed on the usage of the Court, 132; his vein of coarseness, 133; an old gentleman's memories of him in Norwich druggist, 133; his prefaces, 134; his pithy sentences, 135, 167; his eagerness in argument, 136; his inaccuracy, 137; the *Annus Mirabilis* examined in detail, 138; his happy comparisons, 139, 155 n, 165; his frequent borrowing from other authors, 141 n, 143; in poetry, he is always emulating some one else, 142; liability to mix prose in his poetry, 144; his plays, 146; the comic ones unsuccessful, 148; their nastiness, 148; **6**, 59; his apology for it, **3**, 152; defence of heroic plays in the French style, 153; his poor success in following it, 158, 162; had no aptitude for the stage, 163; his apology for his own faults, 163; the admirable single passages in his plays, 164; his persistent capability of enthusiasm, 166; his blank verse, 168; instances of pathos, 169; his sterling sense, 169, 182; fervent rather than imaginative, but often picturesque, 170; his moralizing always good, 172; his plots poor, 173; forbearing in literary quarrels, 174; devoid of jealousy, 175; his satire, 176; the judicious criticism of his prefaces, 179; his influence on English literature, 182; allows himself to fall into verbiage, 182; his Latinisms, 183; his use

- of English, 185; his conversion to Romanism, 186; the mingled scepticism and superstition of his mind, 187; his personal appearance, 187; the secret of his eminence, 188; his genius, 190; his funeral characteristic of his life, 191; his debt to French literature, **2**, 221; assisted the triumph of French taste in England, **4**, 16; prosody, 113; a pupil of Spenser, 351.
- compared with Burke, **3**, 100; with Pope, 114, 177, 184, 190; **4**, 57; with Rubens, **3**, 115; with Voltaire, 180; with Wordsworth, **6**, 113.
- on the productions of a poet's later years, **3**, 112; on the improvement in poets after forty, 112, 127; on his own tastes, 119 n; on hastiness in writing, 120 n; on his own powers, 122; on skill in English composition, 130, 131; on the influence of women in refining language, 131; on quatrains and rhyme, 135, 138; on blank verse, 137 n; on comets, 139; on suicide, 141 n; on the failure of his *Wild Gallant*, 147; on the corruption of the Court, 150; on his lack of comic power, 152; on contemporary poetry, 154; on rhyme, 154, 155, 168; on French drama, 159, 160; on the character of the French and English languages, 161; on forgiveness of injuries, 175; on the *Rehearsal*, 175; on good-nature, 176; on satire, 176; on translation, 181; on the enrichment of English with foreign words, 183; on sublimity, 189 n; on English literature of the Restoration, **4**, 15.
- on Shakespeare, **3**, 37, 113; on Boileau, 99; on Milton's rhyme, 110; on Polybius, 113 n; on Cowley, 119 n, 127; on Virgil, 120, 180; on Homer, 120 n; on Spenser, 123; **4**, 351; on Sylvester's *Du Bartas*, **3**, 123; on Swift, 132 n; on Jonson, 143; on his English, 185 n; on Waller, 154; on Racine's *Bojazel*, 160; on Donne, 171 n; on Oldham, 177; on Burnet, 178; on Chaucer, 180, 293; on Claudian, 180; on Ovid, 180; on Theocritus, 180.
- Swift on, **3**, 97, 132 n; on his prefaces, 134; Gray on, 106 n, 173; Milton on, 114; Johnson on, 140; Pope on, 173, 188; Congreve on, 178; Horne Tooke on, 180; Cowper on, 190; Dennis on, 190.
- Abalom and Achitophel*, character of Zimri, **3**, 177; Coleridge on, 179 n; *Albumazar* quoted, 143; *Alexander's Feast*, 186; *All for Love*, 37, 163, 173; quoted, 164, 168, 170, 172, 173; *Amphitryon* quoted, 145; *Anus Mirabilis*, 122, 133; Pepys's comment on, 134; examined in detail, 138; *Astræa Redux*, 110, 118; *Aurengzebe* quoted, 111, 139, 166, 169; *Cleomenes* quoted, 169; *Commendatory verses* prefixed to the Sacred Epigrams of John Hodgeson, 108; *Conquest of Granada*, 165; quoted, 126, 165, 166; *On the Death of Lord Hastings*, 107; *Don Sebastian*, Horne Tooke on, 173; quoted, 129, 141 n, 169; *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, 153; *Evening Love*, 148; *Horace*, *Ode iii.* 29, 114; *Indian Emperor* acted at Court, 175 n; quoted, 165; *King Arthur* quoted, 129; *Limberham*, 152; *MacFlecknoe* quoted, 163; *Maiden Queen*, 135 n, 136 n, 148; quoted, 165; *Marriage à la Mode* quoted, 171; *Œdipus* quoted, 128, 172; *Poem to Lord Clarendon* quoted, 111; *Rival Ladies* quoted, 166, 168; *Royal Martyr* quoted, 125, 163; *Sir Martin Marall*, Pepys on, 148; *Spanish Friar*, 146, 148; quoted, 146, 171; *Stanzas on the death of Cromwell*, 109, 116, 118; *Wild Gallant*, 147.
- Dual nature of life, **2**, 267.
- Du Bartas, founder of the cultist school, **4**, 8.
- Ducks. *See under* Birds.
- Dudley, Gov. Joseph, **2**, 73.
- Duel declined by Josiah Quincy, **2**, 302.
- Duke, Alice, her confession of witchcraft, **2**, 340.
- Dunbar, William, **4**, 271; *Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins*, 269; *Merle and Nightingale* quoted, 268.
- Dunbar, battle of, **2**, 7.
- Dunciad. *See* Pope.
- Duns Scotus, **1**, 253.
- Dunton, John, his journey to New England, **6**, 150.
- Dutch, European ridicule of, **3**, 233; their true quality, 233; their democracy the cause of European dislike, 234.
- Dutch captain, X's story of, **1**, 119.
- Duty, neglected, **5**, 312.
- Duvergier de Hauranne, **3**, 241.
- Dwight, Timothy, **2**, 153; his *Conquest of Canada*, **3**, 306.
- Dyce, Rev. Alex., **1**, 283, 316; his excellent editorial work, 318; cited, 342.
- Dyer, John, **4**, 5.
- Dying, **6**, 42; the calmness and repose of, **1**, 236. *See also*, Death.
- E. K. *See* Kirke, Edmund.
- E PLURIBUS UNUM, **5**, 45-74.
- Early rising, inconveniences of, **1**, 8.
- Earnestness, **3**, 82.

- East winds, **1**, 77; **6**, 17.
 Easter at St. Peter's, Rome, **1**, 151, 200.
 Eating one's words a wholesome diet in some cases, **5**, 266.
 Eaton, his account of the dissolution of Parliament in 1655 quoted by Mason, **2**, 34.
 Ecclesiastes, **4**, 323; cynicism of, **2**, 104.
 Ecclesiasticus, the Man of Leisure due to, **6**, 220.
 Edda, Elder, **1**, 106; **2**, 359.
 Edda age, the sea-serpent a last relic of, **1**, 108.
 Editing, Mr. Hazlitt's theory of, **1**, 336, 347. *See also*, Emendation.
 Editors, Mätzner on, **1**, 319.
 Editors of early English literature, necessary qualifications of, **1**, 259, 267.
 Edmondson, William, **2**, 65.
 Education, undervalued in America, **1**, 6; too often cramps and stunts nature, **32**; M., a famous river-driver an example of an educated man, **31**; in early New England, **2**, 15, 18; **6**, 147; effect of teaching by rote, **4**, 358; the library a means of self-education, **6**, 83; the three R's system, **83**; the power of thought its highest result, **89**; its importance to the state, **97**; the tendency to lay the blame for the pupil's shortcomings on the teacher, **150**; literature not to be sacrificed to language in teaching, **152**; literature and philology both to be cultivated, **153**; the office of the higher instruction the training of guides for society, **159**; liberal studies always to take the lead, **160**; usefulness of variety in study, **161**; dangers of the voluntary system, **162**; the value of compulsion, **163**; is learning naturally repulsive to youth? **164**; due to faulty methods of teaching, **164**; the study of the classics, **165**; advantages of study abroad, **167**; a college education no longer prized, **170**; free public schools desirable, but not free text-books, **170**; necessity of an organic relation between higher and lower schools, **171**; the general purpose of colleges to train the faculties for the duties rather than the business of life, **176**; courses of study to be adapted to the highest level of intelligence, **177**; sneered at by practical politicians, **191**. *See also*, American schools; French schools; Public schools; Scholarship; Teaching; Universities.
 Eels, boys scrambling for at the Fountain of Trevi, Rome, **1**, 216.
 Eger, Sir, and Sir Grine, passage quoted, **3**, 327.
 Egg-laying creatures, certain generations compared to, **2**, 12.
 Egotism, **1**, 42; **5**, 207; of travellers and reporters, **1**, 121; intolerant and intolerable, **4**, 84.
 Egyptian head-dresses in Italy, **1**, 171.
 Egyptian magicians, **2**, 357.
 ELECTION IN NOVEMBER, 1860, **5**, 17-44.
 Election-days in Boston, **1**, 61.
 Elective system in college, **6**, 161, 178.
 Elegancy in poetry, Phillips on, **4**, 2.
 Elegy on the Snow brothers, **1**, 67.
 Elegies, **3**, 117.
 Elfrida. *See* Mason, William.
 Eliot, C. W., President, his administration, **6**, 167.
 Elisions in Milton's verse, **4**, 106.
 Ellsworth, Oliver. on the necessity of coercive power in the government, **5**, 148.
 Elocution, Emerson's manner, **1**, 359.
 Eloquence, **2**, 25.
 Eloquent writing, its secret, **2**, 233.
 Emancipation forced upon the government by the rebels, **5**, 169; the only merciful way of punishing the real authors of the rebellion, **176**; a powerful minority opposed to, **198**; announced as the one essential for readmission to the Union, **237**; gradualism an unsuccessful policy, **238**.
 Embargo, **2**, 301.
 Emendation of texts, **3**, 23 n.
 EMERSON, THE LECTURER, **1**, 349-360; his attractiveness does not diminish, **349**; Roydon's lines on Sidney applied to, **349**, **360**; the secret of his popularity his wide range, **350**; his system need not be analyzed, **350**; essentially a poet, **351**; proof of his genius, **351**; his diction, **351**; his power of stimulation and inspiration, **352**; his power the result of character, **352**; his perennial youth, **353**; his lectures in 1868 characterized, **353**; the delight of listening to his first lectures, **354**; his audiences described, **355**; his awakening power, **356**, **366**; his reminiscences of the intellectual influences of his own life, **357**; the country's debt to him, **358**; his masculine fibre, **351**, **358**, **366**; his manner of speaking, **359**; his speech at the Burns dinner, **359**; his sphinx, **50**; the herald of the decease of Puritanism, **364**; and the embodiment of its spirit, **365**; his artistic range narrow, **365**; the sleeping partner in many reform movement-, **365**; his oration before the Phi Beta Kappa Society, **366**; the tendency of his teaching compared with that of Carlyle, **367**; Thoreau one of his disciples, **368**;

- typical, to some extent, of American character, **2**, 151; on winter, **3**, 265, 272; popular respect for, **6**, 32; on Everett's teaching, 156; *also*, **3**, 132 n.
- Emmanuel College, the delegate from, at the Harvard anniversary, **6**, 179.
- Emotion mistaken for conviction, **2**, 250.
- Empedocles, **1**, 1.
- Empire, Dante on its relations to the Papacy, **4**, 239.
- Empyrean, Dante on, **4**, 168; Dante compares theology to, 201.
- Encyclopædias, **6**, 90.
- End of the world, Dryden's references to, **3**, 145.
- Endicott, John, **2**, 25; on Hugh Peter and Mrs. Sheffield, 27.
- Enduring greatness inconsistent with great contemporary influence, **2**, 246.
- England, effect of the Reformation on the life of, **4**, 293; the development of the "English people," 293, 295; the Civil Wars of the Roses a barren period, 295; Shakespeare on, 295; Spenser's love of, 350; ignorance of America, **5**, 214; the "Old Home" to Americans, **6**, 40. *See also*, English constitution; English politics.
- under Elizabeth, **3**, 2, 4; — under the Commonwealth, references to in Roger Williams's letters, **2**, 31; — in 1653, dissolution of the Rump Parliament described by Haynes, 34; — in 1655, Mason's account of the dissolution of Parliament, 33; — in 1658, Hooke's letter on, 38; — in 1659, Hooke's account of the Protector's death and the affairs of the country, 40; — under Charles II., coarseness of the age, **3**, 132; condition of society, 151; its debauched morals and urbane manners, **4**, 13; a period of materialism and insincerity, 18; contrasted with the previous generation, 18; — in 18th century, its coarseness, **6**, 60; — in 1861, attitude toward America, **5**, 78; recognizes the Southern States as belligerents, 249; — in 1869, relations with America, **3**, 252.
- English Academy, Dryden hints at, **3**, 130.
- English artists in Italy, **1**, 76.
- English blood, a blood to be proud of, **6**, 38.
- English Church, its relation to the Roman Church, **2**, 274; Lecky on its attitude toward witchcraft, 377 n; Wordsworth a defender of the Establishment, **4**, 367.
- English Civil War, Maidstone's summary of, **2**, 36.
- English climate, Charles II. on, **3**, 283.
- English constitution, **5**, 246; **6**, 34; essentially democratic, **6**, 15.
- English court, Swift on the poor English spoken at, **3**, 131; in 16th century, Spenser's warnings against, **4**, 288.
- English criticism, **2**, 85.
- English drama, Lamb's criticism of, **3**, 29, 150; Voltaire on, **4**, 17; Milton on, 115; Elizabethan, **1**, 277, 280; **4**, 369.
- English dukes, **1**, 186.
- English glees, **4**, 97.
- English history belongs to Americans *de jure*, but not *de facto*, **2**, 274.
- English humor appeals to the whole nation, **2**, 278.
- English humorists, **2**, 169.
- English landscapes, their associations, **6**, 139.
- English language, the Teutonic and Romanic elements in, **1**, 261; **3**, 12; still a mother-tongue in Elizabethan times, **1**, 290; as a vehicle of poetic thought, **3**, 1; its character before and after the time of Shakespeare, 2; in Shakespeare's time, 5-7, 45; its gain from the infusion of Latin, 12; the Latin radicals the more familiar, 14 n; its two periods of poetic beauty, 18; Shakespeare's use of, 18; Dryden's and Swift's plans for reforming, 131; introduction of various polysyllables, 131 n; danger of Latinisms in, 184; in America, 237; Chaucer's effect on, 328, 335, 336; French words transplanted into from 1660 to 1700, **4**, 16; in its purity never obsolete, 277; Samuel Daniel's influence on, 280; Yankeeisms in Spenser, 347 n; its debt to Wordsworth, 415; *also*, **6**, 224.
- Dryden on the knowledge of, **3**, 130; on the character of, 161; on the use of Latinisms in English, 183; Orrery on mistakes in conversation, 130 n; Swift on its corruption by the Court of Charles II., 131.
- English literature, its debt to French literature, **2**, 220; Jonson on its decline after Shakespeare, **3**, 16; the "classical" of the older critics, 96; Anglo-Saxon element in, 314; Norman influence upon, 320; Chaucer its founder, 363; Spenser's influence upon, **4**, 276, 283; its traditions belong to America *also*, **6**, 51, 68.
- of 16th century, not fostered by patronage, **4**, 292; the outgrowth of national conditions, 293, 295; effect of the Renaissance on, 294; its view of life, 412; quality of its scholarship, **6**, 87; — of the Restoration,

- French influence upon, **4**, **11**, **16**, **20**; ashamed of its former provincialism, **14**; Dryden on, **15**;—of 18th century, Keats's opinion of, **3**, **98**; moral greatness impossible but intellectual greatness achieved, **4**, **19**;—of the early 19th century, **296**.
- English poetry, its three reformers, Wordsworth, Keats, and Byron, **1**, **242**; Keats's poems a reaction against the barrel-organ style, **245**; its debt to Latin, **261**; the present conditions of, **2**, **120**; the best is understanding aerated by imagination, **3**, **119**; provinces of the five great poets, **4**, **25**; its apostolical succession, **105**.
- of Chaucer's time, **3**, **324**, **361**; its narrative qualities, **325**;—of the 15th and 16th centuries, **4**, **265**;—of 16th century, influence of Italian love poetry upon, **275**; the period of the saurians, **278**; compared to a shuttlecock, **299**;—of the 17th century, Dryden on its improvement in his own time, **3**, **154**;—of the 18th century, **4**, **2**; contemporary criticism of, **3**; Gray's influence on, **4**; general discontent at the time of Pope's death, **6**; extent of Pope's responsibility for, **24**. *See also*, Pope.
- English politics, the system of limited suffrage, **5**, **232**; low condition of, **251**; political development, **6**, **33**.
- English prisoners among the Grecian bandits, **3**, **238**.
- English prose, its debt to Dryden, **3**, **129**.
- English prosody, in Shakespeare's time, **3**, **8**; Chaucer's verse, **336**; common misunderstanding of, **338**; its treatment of final or medial *e*, **343**, **346**; irregularities of the early versifiers, **348**; Milton's versification, **4**, **97**; the shift of the accent in pentameter verse, **106**; elisions in Milton, **106**, **111 n**; participles in *-ing* normally of one syllable, **108**; verses ending in unaccented syllables, **108**; the old metrists careful of elasticity, **109**; the question of imperfect verses in the old dramatists, **110**; Sidney's and Spenser's experiments, **277**; Spenser's mastery of, **302**; Alexandrines, **304**; the Spenserian stanza, **305 n**, **328**.
- Coleridge on, **3**, **339**; Masson on, **4**, **105**; Spenser on hexameter verse, **277**. *See also*, Alexandrines; Blank verse; Couplets.
- English race, really cares nothing for art, **1**, **76**; complexity of character, **3**, **316**; Norman influence upon, **320**; its sympathy with the spiritual provincialism of the Jew, **4**, **83**; its unity, **6**, **46**, **51**, **68**. *See also*, Anglo-Saxons.
- English Revolution, reaction of the principles of New England seen in, **2**, **4**; carried by means of a religious revival, **7**.
- English spelling, early vagaries of, **1**, **321**.
- English tourists on Lincoln's personal appearance, **5**, **192**.
- English tragedy, **2**, **131**.
- English war with Spain, Williams's references to in 1656, **2**, **32**.
- Englishmen, maintain their own standards in spite of their surroundings, **1**, **24**; their reasons for visiting Italy, **124**; lack of sentiment and imagination, **196**; with palm-branches in St. Peter's, **196**; prefer St. Paul's to St. Peter's, **199**; seldom good travellers, but pleasant traveling-companions, **199**; their practical quality, **2**, **6**; their failure to understand Americans, **135**; their conservatism, **236**; hard for them to understand the impulse of southern races to *pose*, **269**; their national feeling, **282**; sensitive to criticism, **3**, **231**; shocked at American English, **232**; the fine qualities of the first-rate variety, **238**, **239**; the old Tory aversion of former times for America, **243**; they discover after the Civil War that Americans have a country, **246**; must learn to judge Americans on their own merits, **253**; their air of superiority in America caused by finding so many poor imitations of themselves, **238**; instances of rudeness in America, **241**; in foreign galleries, **4**, **12**; their sensitiveness to ridicule, **12**; their reserve described by Barclay, **12**; their fondness for foreign fashions, **13**; distrust of democratic institutions at the opening of the American Civil War, **5**, **181**; their solidity of character, **245**; have developed government by discussion, **6**, **27**. *See also*, Anglo-Saxons.
- Entertaining, the power of, the first element of contemporary popularity, **2**, **79**.
- Enthusiasm aroused by Emerson's early lectures, **1**, **356**; of the Puritans, **2**, **72**; of the poet, **3**, **102**; material for the orator not for the statesman, **5**, **178**; not to be warmed over into anything better than cant, **186**.
- Epic in prose created by Fielding, **6**, **64**.
- Epic poetry, its unreality, **4**, **340 n**; Wordsworth's determination to compose, **398**.
- Eniggram, French fondness for, **4**, **7**.
- Epimetheus*. *See* Longfellow.

- Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*, **1**, 351.
 Epitaphs, **3**, 177 n; of Keats, **1**, 239; near Boston, **6**, 48.
 Epithets, of poetasters, **1**, 14; of Shakespeare, **3**, 354; of Chaucer, 357; in the school of Pope, **4**, 10; in Dante, Rivaroli on, 162, 164; *also*, **3**, 96.
 Equal rights in the opinion of the founders of New England, **2**, 3.
 Equality, in America, **1**, 186; Dante on, **4**, 243; impossible, **6**, 34; the popular belief in regard to, 175; its unobserved but steady growth in the American Colonies, 204; its dangers when suddenly acquired by aliens, 205. *See also*, Democracy.
 Erasmus, **1**, 364; his Latin style, **2**, 167; Scaliger on, **3**, 114 n.
 Esprit lacking in German literature, **2**, 165.
 Essays on favorite poets, **6**, 99.
 "Essays and Reviews," **2**, 12.
 Este, Villa d', in Tivoli, **1**, 132.
 Esthwaite, his irresolution, **1**, 2.
 Esthwaite, England, the simple life of, in Wordsworth's boyhood, **4**, 359.
 Eternity, J. F.'s favorite topic of conversation, **1**, 90.
 Eulogy, **6**, 45; France its native land, **2**, 269.
 Euripides, **2**, 138; **3**, 301; gives hints of sentimentalism, **2**, 253; instances of quibbling cited, **3**, 53 n; *Hippolytus*, **4**, 232.
 Europe, of value for its antiquity, **1**, 49; its problems all solved, and a dead precipitate left, 53; the first sight of, 113.
 European history rich in association, **2**, 273.
 European literature of the 15th century, **4**, 266.
 Europeans, their attitude of patronage toward America, **3**, 239.
 Eurydice confounded with Herodias, **2**, 358 n.
 Eustace on Italy, **1**, 127.
 Eustathius of Thessalonica on snow, **3**, 275.
 Eutychianus, the legend of Theophilus, **2**, 329.
 Evening, approach of, on the road to Subiaco, **1**, 179; its magic touch, **3**, 222.
 Everett, Edward, **5**, 296; his translation of Buttman's Greek grammar, **6**, 156; Emerson on the enthusiasm of his teaching, 156. *See also*, Bell and Everett.
 Everydayness of phrase in Dryden, **3**, 111.
 Evidence, circumstantial and personal, **5**, 118.
 Evil, a cunning propagandist, **4**, 252; in itself but a cheat, **5**, 130; by nature aggressive, 176. *See also*, Sin.
 Evil institutions, effect on national character, **5**, 253.
 Ewer, Dr., alchemist, **2**, 48.
 Exclusiveness of Thoreau, **1**, 371.
 Excuses for failures easily found, **1**, 29.
 Execution in literature, Byron's judgment regarding, **4**, 42.
 Exodus, Dante on its interpretation, **4**, 158.
 Exorcism stopped by Card. Mazarin, **2**, 371.
 Expedients, justice not to be sacrificed to, **5**, 238.
 Experience, its results of little value to others, **1**, 21; **6**, 91; individual, in morals, **4**, 255; *also*, 258; **6**, 191.
 Expression, Dante on, **3**, 17.
 Exuberance in writing, **1**, 244.
 Eyes, **3**, 257.
 F. = Pres. Felton.
 Fables, **2**, 260, 319.
 Fabliaus, **3**, 314.
 Face, changes of expression on, **1**, 73.
 Fact and truth in poetry distinguished, **4**, 384.
 Facts, uncomfortable to the sentimentalist, **2**, 250; their significance, **5**, 131.
 Failure, **2**, 92.
 Fairs, English, Harvard Commencement likened to, **1**, 79.
 Fairy tales, **6**, 17.
 Fairies, **2**, 315.
 Faith, the stage of astrology and alchemy still persists, **2**, 373; Dante's teaching on, **4**, 254.
 Faith and Work, the bases of the Puritan commonwealth, **2**, 75.
 Faith in God, **5**, 130.
 Falstaff, **3**, 19; his regiment, **5**, 53.
 Fame, as worn by Washington Allston, **1**, 77; as embalmed in bibliographies, 317; distinguished from notoriety, **2**, 272; in Europe and America, 276; posthumous, **3**, 100; immortality of, 278; *also*, **4**, 120. *See also*, American fame.
 Fame, literary, frequently of brief duration, **2**, 77; what is required to make it living, 79, 246; importance of imagination, 79, and of art, 80; depends on the sum of an author's powers, 81.
 Fanaticism, **6**, 112; becomes conservatism when established in power, **2**, 6; not truly characteristic of the New England Puritans, **6**, 9.
 Fancy, the rude treatment received by, on entering Rome, **1**, 189; its activity in darkness, **2**, 396.
 Fancy and judgment compared to a rocket and its stick, **2**, 81. *See also*, Imagination.

- Fancy balls, English, **1**, 199.
 Farmer on Shakespeare, **3**, 46.
 Farr, editor of Wither's poems, absurdity of some of his assertions, **1**, 258; inaccuracy of his quotations, 260; his misstatements, 261.
 Fashion, its power, **4**, 11.
 Fastidiousness, **2**, 234.
 Fate, the Greek conception of, **2**, 124; **3**, 57; **5**, 320; the modern recognition of, **2**, 125.
 Faults, men judged by little faults, **1**, 85; expiated by suffering, **6**, 77.
 Fauriel, on prosaic poetry, **3**, 162 n; on mediæval romances in Provençal, 309.
 Faust, the spirit of discontent, **2**, 128; cited by Walburger as an instance of bodily deportation, 354; Wierus doubts the story, 354; *also*, **1**, 107; **2**, 333; **4**, 254.
 Faustrecht, **2**, 94.
 Fear makes men cruel, **2**, 374.
 Federalists, **2**, 301.
 Felicity, lines on, **2**, 312.
 Fellowships, university, **6**, 168.
 Felltham, Owen, **1**, 308, **3**, 185, n.
 Felton, President C. C., his laugh, **1**, 67.
 Fenians, **5**, 318; attitude of Congress toward, 322.
 Fenianism, **2**, 375.
Ferabras cited, **1**, 325.
Ferrez and Porrez. *See* Sackville.
 Fessenden, Senator, **6**, 198.
 Feudalism, effect on commerce, **3**, 247.
 Feuillet, Octave, Sainte-Beuve's nickname for, **6**, 62.
 Fickleness not fairly to be charged to democracy, **2**, 311.
 Fiction, the realistic novel invented by Fielding, **6**, 64; the novel before Fielding, 65; the reading of, profitable, 95; Cervantes the father of the modern novel, 135; historical fiction, **5**, 123. *See also*, French fiction.
 Fidelity, characteristic of Prof. Popkin, **1**, 93.
 FIELDING, HENRY, Address on unveiling his bust, Sept. 4, 1883, **6**, 51-67; his absolute sincerity, 55; his imagination of secondary order, 55; has no tragic power but much pathos, 55; his characters real, but not typical, 56, 65; a humorist, 56; quality of his coarseness, 57; opinions of English literary men on him, 57; Dobson's life of, 57; the few facts of his life, 58; habits of study and industry, 58; his early dramatic pieces show little real knowledge of life, 59; his nature coarse and sensual, but with admiration for the best things of his time, 59; the coarseness of his age, 60; his bluntness of speech more wholesome than the refinement of some modern critics, 60; painted vice as a figure in the social landscape, 61; his purpose moral, 61; acknowledged in his epitaph in Lisbon, 61; his contempt for sentimentality, 62; mistaken estimate of refinement, 62; opinion of Richardson, 62; his love of truth, 62; his force and directness, 62; compared with Hogarth, 63; invented the realistic novel, 64; his work marks an epoch, 64; his Squire Western and Parson Adams, 65, 135; **1**, 317; the beauty of his style, **6**, 66; compared with Swift, 66; his character, 66; Cervantes' influence upon, 135; his remarks on travellers, **1**, 120; his humor, 278; his humor reappears in Carlyle, **2**, 82; *also*, **1**, 364; **2**, 217; **3**, 58, 321, 364.
 Thackeray on, **6**, 63; Byron on, 64.
 Fiesole, **4**, 118.
 Fifth Monarchy men, **1**, 362; **2**, 9, 31.
 Fighting period of life, **1**, 361.
 Figures can be made to fight on both sides, **6**, 216. *See also*, Statistics.
 Figures of speech and figures of statistics, **5**, 58.
 Filefo, **4**, 142.
 Fillmore, Millard, Pres., **5**, 291, 296.
 Finance, value of an M. C.'s observations on, **3**, 198; generally prudent management of, in towns, **6**, 11.
 Fine Arts. *See* Art.
 Finsbury Circus, **1**, 220.
 Firdusi, **4**, 270; poetry of the Trouvères compared to, **3**, 311.
 Fire, in a wongen after moose-hunting, **1**, 37; at the Sibilla in Tivoli, 145; pleasure of playing with, 202; Virgil's and Ovid's lines on kindling, **3**, 287.
 Fire on the hearth described, **1**, 50; its pleasures in winter, **3**, 272.
 Fireside voyages, **1**, 52.
 Fireworks, damp, X's laughter compared to, **1**, 117.
 Fishes' nests in trees, incongruities of life compared to, **1**, 86.
 Fisher, Cardinal, **2**, 22.
 Fishing in the Maine woods, **1**, 41.
 Fisk, James, **4**, 178.
 Fitzgerald, Edward, **1**, 289; **6**, 72; on *Don Quixote*, 135.
 Flail-beat, **1**, 186.
 Flame, Washington Allston's face compared to pale flame, **1**, 73.
 Flaxman, **2**, 124.
 Fleas, humorous confidences on the subject, **1**, 127.
 Fleming, Marjorie, her difficulties with the multiplication table, **6**, 164.
 Fletcher, Giles, **1**, 278; **2**, 223; **3**, 3, 301; his *Purple Island*, **4**, 297 n.

- Fletcher, Phinehas, *Piscatory Eclogues*, 4, 300.
- Flip, Porter's, 1, 86.
- Flodden Field* cited, 1, 341.
- Flogging, 1, 264; as a means of education, 2, 298; 6, 163; mnemonic virtue of, 3, 95.
- Florence, 1, 191; better liked than Rome, 213; the statues of the Uffizi, 2, 281; its early history, 4, 118; its great men, 119; the Campanile, 119; its political-factions in Dante's time, 126, 129; history of, from 1293, 128; the Neri and Bianchi in 1300, 130; its tardy appreciation of Dante, 141; a cenotaph of Dante erected in 1829, 142.
- Florida, her proposal to secede absurd, 5, 48.
- Flowers, Keats's enjoyment of, 1, 240.
- Floyd, J. B., 5, 81, 86.
- Flunkeyism, ideal, of Carlyle, 2, 105.
- Flying fish, 1, 102.
- Flying horses, children's pleasure on, 1, 79.
- Foibles, human, as treated by Shakespeare, 1, 279.
- Folklore, 2, 314.
- Force, brute, Carlyle's belief in, 2, 117.
- Force in writing, the secret of, 3, 14.
- FOREIGNERS, ON A CERTAIN CONDESCENSION IN, 3, 220-254; consider that they confer a favor on the country they visit, 224; a German beggar's opinions of America, 229; consider Americans too sensitive to criticism, 232.
- Forest of Arden, 1, 41.
- Forest primeval, as seen from a mountain top, 1, 40.
- Forgiveness, Dryden's lines on, 3, 167, 175.
- Forks brought from Italy by Tom Coryate, 1, 126, 200.
- Form, its proper function, 2, 136, 138. *See also*, Style.
- Formalism of the later Puritanism, 2, 74.
- Forster, Georg, on Ramler, 2, 200 n.
- Forsyth on Italy, 1, 126.
- Fortescue, General, letter to, from Cromwell (1655), 2, 36.
- Fortune, herself the sport of Fate, verses on, 1, 157; lines on, 2, 312.
- Fortune, Temple of, at Palestrina, 1, 157.
- Fortune-hunters, a way of getting rid of, suggested, 2, 367.
- Forum, Roman. *See* Rome — Forum.
- Foscolo, Ugo, on Dante, 4, 134; on the condemnation of part of the *Div. Com.* by the Inquisition, 143; on the date of the *Divina Commedia*, 156; on Dante's critics, 164; on likeness of Milton to Dante, 171; *also*, 169 n.
- Fossil footprints, 3, 278.
- Foster, John, the hermit of Cambridge, 1, 89.
- Fountains Abbey, 1, 84; the dreary white statues, 215.
- Fouqué, his *Undine*, 4, 32.
- Fourth of July celebrations, 1, 203.
- Fowls, 1, 185; at the inn in Pales-trina, 160.
- Fox, Charles J., compared with Daniel Webster, 2, 275; opinion of Dryden's translation of Horace, 3, 114 n; letter to Wordsworth, 4, 381.
- Fox, George, 1, 362; one of his books sent to J. Winthrop, Jr., 2, 64, 65.
- France, the suffrage in, 5, 304; the causes of the Revolution, 6, 16; a manufacturer of small politicians to-day, 208.
- in 1792, 4, 365; — in 1815, wise re-constructive measures, 5, 321; — in 1861, recognizes the Southern States as belligerents, 249.
- Francesca, Dante's tenderness to-wards, 4, 171.
- Francia, Dr., Carlyle on, 2, 95.
- Francion*, 6, 64.
- Francis, St., 6, 119.
- Franconia Notch, talk with a man at a saw-mill, 1, 2.
- Frangipani, ancestors of Dante, 4, 122.
- Franklin, Benjamin, 2, 154; 3, 363.
- Frascati, the railroad to, 1, 150.
- Fraser, the Scotch gardener in Cam-bridge, 1, 66.
- Fraunce, Abraham, a passage of Mil-ton traced to, 1, 316.
- Frederick the Great, his portrait in the Cambridge barber's shop, 1, 62; his treatment of Carlyle imag-ined, 2, 94; his kingdom, his private patrimony, 110; his contempt for German literature, 111; the nar-row limits of his nature, 112; his popularity, 112; few people at-tached to him, 113; Knebel's judg-ment of him, 113; his inherited traits, 114; had no genius but a masterly talent for organization, 114; his contempt for all civil dis-tinction, 115; refuses to appoint Lessing librarian, 206; his prefer-ence for French literature, 220.
- Free lectures and entertainments, 3, 255.
- Free schools, 6, 170.
- Free trade, its slow growth in Eng-land, 6, 187; in America, 203.
- Freedmen, will require special pro-tection, 5, 223; must be made land-holders, 228, and voters, 228; their inherent right to suffrage in a de-mocracy, 230; the proposition to set-tle them by themselves in a separate district, 231; the nation's duty to-ward, 311, 324; the effect of John-

- son's policy upon, 320; compared to the new holders of land in France, 321.
- Freedom, Barbour's lines on, **4**, 269; Wordsworth's consistent devotion to, **6**, 102. *See also*, Liberty.
- Freedom of thought, its debt to Voltaire, **2**, 263.
- Freedom of the will, the corner-stone of Dante's system, **4**, 238, 244.
- French, Jonathan, minister at Andover, **2**, 298.
- French Academy encourages the eulogistic style, **2**, 269.
- French army in Rome, **1**, 50.
- French cooks, the secret of their art applicable to good writing, **3**, 119.
- French criticism, **2**, 166; its defect, **4**, 9; confounds the common with the vulgar, 20.
- French drama, effect of the demands of rhyme upon its style, **3**, 158; Dryden on, 159, 160; Goethe's study of, 162.
- French fiction, of the *corps-de-ballet* variety, **3**, 153.
- French humor, appeals to the whole nation, **2**, 278.
- French language, spoken by English tourists and Italian guides, **1**, 198; Dryden on its character, **3**, 161; unsuited for translating Dante, **4**, 145.
- French literature, its quality of style, **2**, 165; its influence on German, and on all modern literature, 220; the school of the *cultists*, **4**, 8; its quality, 20; at one time both grave and profound, 316 n; in the 16th and 17th centuries, 293 n.
- French officers in the Revolutionary War, **3**, 240.
- French poetry, Gray on, **3**, 162; Faurel on, 162 n; Norman influence upon, 314; rules of pronunciation, 344; Dante familiar with, **4**, 212 n. *See also*, Trouvères.
- of 18th century, its style overran Europe, **4**, 7; Voltaire's difficulties with, 7.
- French politics benumbed by a creeping paralysis, **6**, 198.
- French prosody, the treatment of final and medial *e*, **3**, 344, 346.
- French realists, delight in impurity, **6**, 60.
- French Revolution, Burke's fury against, **2**, 234; its symptoms seen in Rousseau's writings, 263; failure of its attempt to make over human nature, 264; prefigured by the giant of Spenser, **4**, 350; its political lessons, **5**, 186; Napoleon on, **6**, 33; Wordsworth's view of, 103; tried to reform society after the fashion of Don Quixote, 124; *also*, **4**, 367; **5**, 218.
- French Revolutionists aped the Roman republic, **2**, 288.
- French romance, its long-windedness, **3**, 325.
- French schools, the teaching in, **6**, 169.
- French soldiers in Rome, **1**, 189.
- French standards, English judgment of, **2**, 268.
- French tragedy, **2**, 131; **3**, 56.
- Frenchmen, their reasons for visiting Italy, **1**, 123; American feeling toward, 124; sensitive to criticism, **3**, 231; their contempt for Americans, 239; on America, 241; delight in elegantly turned phrases, **4**, 7; quality of their intellect, 20; morals said to have been corrupted by America, **6**, 12.
- Fresh Pond meadows, **3**, 222.
- Friendship, **2**, 255.
- Frittata for supper at Subiaco, **1**, 182.
- Frobisher, Sir Martin, **2**, 290.
- Froissart, **3**, 295; description of a book, 338 n; treatment of final *e*, 347; his *Chronicles*, **5**, 121.
- Frost, his exquisite handiwork, **3**, 285.
- Froude on Henry VIII., **5**, 124.
- Fugitive Slave Law, **5**, 296; for runaway states, 54.
- Fuller, Thomas, **1**, 281; on self-examination, 44; gives an example of retributive justice, **5**, 128.
- Fulton, **2**, 154.
- Funerals, **3**, 255; the fiend's suggestion at, **2**, 370.
- Furies *v.* Orestes, before the Areopagus, **2**, 368 n.
- Furnivall, F. J., founder of the Chaucer Society, **3**, 297.
- Fuseli, **1**, 173; **4**, 317 n.
- Future life, its necessity recognized by the gentile world, **5**, 127.
- Gaelic not understood by the spirits, **2**, 366.
- Gaetani, **1**, 130.
- Galileo, **3**, 16; **5**, 13.
- Gallo-Roman culture, **3**, 305.
- Gambetta, **6**, 208.
- Gammer Gurton's Needle, **4**, 300.
- Gano, **3**, 227.
- GARDEN ACQUAINTANCE, *Mx*, **3**, 192-219.
- Gardens, Italian, **1**, 215.
- Gardner, Capt. Joseph, **2**, 57.
- GARFIELD, J. A., President, address on the death of London, Sept. 24, 1881, **6**, 38; the English expressions of sympathy on occasion of his death, 38, 40; the death-scene unexampled, 41; his good nature, 42; his death truly for his country, 43; his character, 43; completeness of his life, 44; endeared to all men, 44;

- prayers for his recovery offered in Palestine, 44; his great qualities, 45.
- Garfield, Mrs., her devotedness, 6, 40.
- Garibaldi, his career in Sicily watched with interest, 5, 17.
- Garinet quoted, 2, 387.
- Garrick, anecdote of his counterfeiting drunkenness, 2, 103; in Hamlet, 3, 69; omitted the grave-diggers' scene, 73...
- Garrow, translation of the *Vita Nuova*, 4, 149.
- Garth, Dr., suggests the addition of the Sylphs to the *Rape of the Lock*, 4, 32.
- Gascoigne, 3, 345; 4, 274; quoted, 1, 344.
- Gatehurst, house of Sir K. Digby, 2, 57.
- Gawayne cited, 1, 328.
- Geese. *See under Birds.*
- Gellert, 2, 219; Mozart on, 139.
- Genealogies made to order, 1, 318.
- General, sympathy with, in defeat, 5, 92; idealized by his country, 93.
- Generalities, 6, 181.
- Generosity of American rich men, 6, 96.
- Genezzano, visit to, 1, 163-170.
- Geniality, 1, 87.
- Genius compared with talent, 1, 84; 2, 240; the meaning of the word, 1, 87; allowed to repeat itself, 352; neglect by the World not a proof of, 2, 147; does not discover itself, 160.
- genius and character, 171; never an impostor, 240, 244; its mastery, 241; the world not ungrateful to, 242; alone exempt from examination of character, 257; Johnson's theory of, 3, 146; the test of, 293; the two kinds of, 4, 28; Browning on, 6, 54; its creative office in literature, 54; never finds life commonplace, 54; *also*, 2, 190; 3, 65, 357.
- of Washington Allston, 1, 77; of President Kirkland, 83; recognized in Keats, 242; absent in Frederick the Great, 2, 114; of Wordsworth, 148; of Lessing, 224; of Shakespeare, 244; of Coleridge, 6, 77.
- Gentility, Pope's notion of, 3, 188 n.
- Gentlemen, the men specially created to be such, 1, 72; proof in Emerson that Democracy can develop them, 368; drawn by Shakespeare, 3, 92; the end of education to produce true gentlemen, 6, 177.
- Geographies formerly works of fancy and imagination, 1, 110.
- Geology, influence of its discoveries on human annals, 6, 138.
- George III. and his violin teacher, anecdote of, 1, 219; the *Gratulation* presented to, by Harvard College, 6, 151.
- George, Henry, 6, 35.
- George Barnwell*, a tragedy. *See Lillo.*
- German criticism, 2, 166; its burrowing propensities, 163; inclined to over-subtlety, 6, 122.
- German humor, 2, 165, 169.
- German language, its reaction on style, 2, 164.
- German learning, supplies lanterns but not the light, 2, 164; like the elephants of Pyrrhus, 166; the world's debt to, 166; its dangers, 6, 152.
- German literature, Carlyle's relation to the "storm and thrust" period, 2, 93; Frederick the Great's contempt for, 112; its want of *esprit*, 165; cause of its lack of style, 167; its seeking after some foreign mould, 167; its sentiment, 168; Lessing the first to have a conception of style, 172; value of Lessing's influence upon, 229.
- of the 18th century, a pretentious sham, 2, 218; its pedantry and provincialism, 220; its relation to French, 220.
- German Muse, 2, 183.
- German poetry, the romantic movement, 2, 139.
- Germans, their reasons for visiting Italy, 1, 123; their idea of humor, 2, 90; their fondness for mare's-nests, 163; supply raw materials for other minds to work upon, 165; their want of tact, 167; their national stoicism, 227; sensitive to criticism, 3, 231; their contempt for America, 239.
- Germany, the political condition of the U. S. before the war compared to, 5, 316; love of country impossible in, in the 18th cent., 2, 203.
- Gervinus, on Shakespeare, 2, 163; 3, 68; on Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, 4, 231.
- Gesler's hat, 2, 218.
- Gesta Romanorum*, 2, 242.
- Gesticulating students, 1, 56.
- Gettysburg, 3, 223.
- Gevaudan, the wild beast of, 2, 362.
- Ghiberti, 4, 119.
- Ghosts. *See Apparitions; Haunted houses.*
- Giant, Canadian, at Commencement, 1, 80.
- Gibbon, 2, 237.
- Gifford, William, 1, 229; abuse of Keats in the *Quarterly*, 226; the best editor of early literature, 318.
- Gift of tongues, its spread among the transcendentalists, 1, 362.
- Gilbert, Sir Humphrey, 2, 290.
- Gil Blas*. *See LeSage.*

- Gilchrist, his controversy with Bowles, 4, 51.
- Gill, Alexander, 4, 123.
- Giotto, 4, 119; Dante his friend, 125.
- Giraldi, 3, 364.
- Glacier, encroachments of slavery compared to, 5, 43.
- Gladiators, 5, 126.
- Gladstone, W. E., 6, 208.
- Glanvil, Joseph, accounts of witchcraft, 2, 338; on the alleged transportation of witches, 354; believed in witchcraft, 377; his *Sadducismus Triumphatus*, 11.
- Glass model of a ship in the Cambridge barber's shop, 1, 63.
- Glaucus, 2, 79.
- Glees, 4, 97.
- Gleim, Joh. Wilh. Lud., 2, 197, 200; Lessing's advice to, 203.
- Gliddon, 5, 220.
- Glory, departed, its ghost lingers, 1, 191. *See also*, Fame.
- God, the Emperor of Heaven in Dante's idea, 4, 242 n; Dante's vision of, 256; the methods of the divine justice, 5, 128. *See also*, Providence.
- Godeau, on snow, 3, 275.
- Goethe, Carlyle and Emerson both disciples of, 1, 367; attracted to alchemy, 2, 47; the imaginative quality in his works uniform, 85; his influence on Carlyle, 85; a European poet, 121; Schiller's verses to, quoted, 124; his comedies dull, 146; his struggle to emancipate himself from Germany, 150; lack of coherence in his longer works, 167; early notes to Frau von Stein, 168; in *Werthermontrirung*, 169; grandness of his figure, 172; sacrificed morality to poetic sense, 195; his visit to Gottsched, 218; takes pleasure in his hypothetical despair, 251; essentially an observer, and incapable of partisanship, 3, 2; got his knowledge of classics second hand, 46; uncontemporaneous nature, 101; paid slight attention to Dante, 4, 145; early love of Gothic, 235; possibly influenced Wordsworth, 380; compared with Wordsworth, 413; his teaching of self-culture, 6, 103; *also*, 1, 357, 364; 2, 174, 187, 207 n, 308; 3, 25, 301, 355; 4, 61, 161.
- on the failure to escape one's own shadow, 1, 121; on Italy, 126; on the German idea of humor, 2, 90; on the office of the Muse, 108; on Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, 133; on Lessing as a genius, 231; on the distinction between the ancient and modern drama, 3, 57; on Shakespeare, 63, 66; on Hamlet, 87; compares a poem to a painted window, 67; on destructive and productive criticism, 67; on thinking pen in hand, 123; on the French drama, 162; on snow in sunshine, 267.
- Achilleis*, 2, 129; 3, 47; *Faust*, written without thought of its deeper meaning, 90; the second part, 2, 139, 168, 4, 145; *Götz von Berlichingen*, 3, 63; — *Harz-reise im Winter*, 267; — *Hermann und Dorothea*, 2, 129; 3, 46; — *Iphigenie*, 2, 133; — *Roman Idylls*, 129; — *Ueber allen Gipfeln*, 4, 370; — *Werther*, 2, 251; — *Wilhelm Meister*, 167; Wordsworth on, 4, 380.
- Götz of the Iron Hand, Carlyle's type of the highest, 2, 94.
- Goffe, Col., of Deerfield, 2, 292; Prof. P. compared to, 1, 93.
- Gold of the poet, 2, 78.
- Golden age, behind every generation, 2, 98.
- Gold-fish in a vase compared to self-absorbed travellers, 1, 49.
- Goldsmith, his description of a mutual admiration society, 2, 201; his figure of the 'lengthening chain,' 3, 136 n; Wordsworth familiar with, 4, 360 n, 361; his influence on Wordsworth, 369, 370; *also*, 3, 357, 364.
- Deserted Village*, 2, 135; 4, 370; — *Traveller*, 370; — *Vicar of Wakefield*, 2, 104, 168.
- Golias, Bishop, 1, 84; 6, 151; his motto appropriate for Americans, 1, 199.
- Gongora, poet of the cultist school, 4, 8.
- Gonzales, Manuel, on servants in London, 2, 45.
- Good, in itself infinitely and eternally lovely, 5, 130; its conquests silent and beneficent, 176.
- Good luck, 4, 391.
- Good nature, 6, 42; Dryden on, 3, 176; fostered by a democracy, 6, 97.
- Good society, 3, 232; Dante's notions of, 4, 176; to be found more easily in books than in the world, 6, 84.
- Good taste the conscience of the mind, 6, 178.
- Goodliness of the world, 3, 222.
- Goose, Mother. *See* Mother Goose, 3, 338.
- Gorboduc*. *See* Sackville.
- Gosling, Lady, her obituary, 2, 219.
- Gothic, lack of agreement with the Roman, 1, 193.
- Gothic cathedral, impressiveness and nobleness of, 1, 206; unmatched in ancient art, 212; the visible symbol of an inward faith, 4, 234; compared to the *Divine Comedy*, 236.
- Gottsched, Lessing on, 2, 175; his *Art of poetry*, 218; Goethe's visit to,

- 218; his service to German literature, 219.
- Gout, 6, 13.
- Government, Dante on, 4, 243; Machiavelli on the duration of, 5, 35; the absurdity of the *laissez-faire* system shown by Buchanan, 47, 56; stability the first requisite of, 66; extent of dominion an advantage, 66; bound to enforce its laws, 74; an oligarchy built on men and a commonwealth built of them, 89; the resources of prestige and sentiment greater for an hereditary ruler, 184; self-defence its first duty, 185; that which makes a nation great in every fibre to be preferred to that which produces great men, 215; the Anglo-Saxon mind prefers a practical system, the French a theoretical, 218; in the Old World and in the New, 251; resides in the rights of all, 304; the duties distinguished from the rights of self-government, 305; the fallings of all forms of, 6, 27; government by discussion and by a majority of voices, 27; men of ability sure to govern in the end, 29; the name of the system unimportant, 33; unwritten constitutions, 34. *See also*, Politics; Statesmanship.
- Governor of Massachusetts, his appearance on artillery-election days, 1, 58.
- Gower, Chaucer on, 3, 321; his dulness, 329; his use of rhyme, 329, 336; *also*, 345.
- Grace at the Harvard Commencement dinners, 1, 83.
- Graduate, oldest surviving, his advantages, 1, 82.
- Grafty, Mrs., of Craven St., Finsbury, her recollections of Keats, 1, 223.
- Grahame, on winter, 3, 272.
- Grandier, Urbain, witnesses at his trial, 2, 365; the object of a conspiracy, 371.
- Grandiloquent style, by whom used, 2, 63.
- Grangier, first French translation of Dante, 4, 143.
- Grant, General, Lincoln's remark in relation to, 3, 149 n.
- Granuffo in Marston's *Fawn*, 1, 266, 273.
- Gratis-instinct in human nature, 3, 257.
- Gray, Thomas, his art, 2, 80; fondness for Latin poems, 129; inspired by Collins, 4, 4; Wordsworth's debt to, 4 n, 361; his taste, 5 n; Spenser's influence upon, 352; occasional touch of coarseness, 6, 60; *also*, 2, 146; 3, 269, 363; 6, 108.
- on first thoughts, 3, 10 n; on Dryden, 106 n, 173; on French poetry, 162 n; on Dyer, 4, 5 n; on the condition of the English colleges, 6, 150.
- Progress of Poesy*, 4, 4; — *Sonnet on the Death of West*, a verse traced to Lucretius, 5 n.
- Grazzini, 3, 364.
- Great deeds, the ghosts of, haunt their graves, 1, 191.
- Great men, seldom discovered in their own lifetime, 1, 74; 2, 32; the result of combining every one's reminiscences of, considered, 1, 74; Boswell's predilection for, 123; stories of their childhood, 223; the valet de chambre estimate of, 2, 257; in America, 280; characteristics of, 3, 104; their parentage and early surroundings, 4, 362; their production the glory but not the duty of a country, 5, 215; 6, 209; their effect on history, 91; the importance of, 208; *also*, 2, 281; 6, 45.
- GREAT PUBLIC CHARACTER, A [Josiah Quincy], 2, 272-312.
- Greatness, seems a simple thing to itself, 2, 160.
- Greek architecture, sameness of effect in public buildings, 1, 213; its completeness, 4, 233.
- Greek art, 3, 356.
- Greek drama, its conventional forms not applicable to modern drama, 2, 130; the modern opera and oratorio compared to, 132; *Samson Agonistes*, its best modern reproduction, 133; objections to servile copying of its form and style, 136; difficulty of regaining the Greek point of view, 137; the three stages of Greek tragedy, 138; its simplicity in form, not in expression, 3, 39; parallel passages noted in Shakespeare, 49; contrasted with the modern in its motive, 56; its personages types, not individuals, 58; keeps its hold on men's minds, 65; its simplicity, 4, 232; its relation to the higher powers, 233; its completeness, 233.
- Greek gods in Greek literature, 4, 233.
- Greek ideal, the striving after, 2, 124.
- Greek language, the study of, 6, 164; its flexibility and precision, 166.
- Greek literature, Cicero's twaddle about, 1, 100; the best attitude toward it, 2, 127; its relation to modern literature, 127-139; probable truth of modern imitations, 135; in what respects it should be followed, 138; its quality, 3, 32; misfortune of applying it to drill in grammar, 33; still furnishes the standards for modern work, 34; Prof. Popkin's appreciation of, 6, 152; its living quality, 165; value of

- the study of, 166. *See also*, Classics.
- Greek sculpture, **4**, 119.
- Greek thought contrasted with modern thought, **2**, 136.
- Greeks, their artistic nature, how to gain a true conception of, **1**, 48.
- Greeley, Horace, his intimate knowledge of our politics, **5**, 133; his *The American Conflict* contrasted with Pollard's *Southern History*, 132; its style, 138; its fairness, 139.
- Green, Christian, witch, **2**, 340.
- Greenough, the sculptor, **6**, 151.
- Greenville, Maine, reached late at night, **1**, 12.
- Greenwood's museum in Boston, **1**, 61.
- Gregariousness of men, **2**, 386.
- Gridiron, its use unknown in northern Maine, **1**, 8.
- Grief desiring other company than its own, **2**, 248; idealized, 297; expressed in elegies, **3**, 117.
- Grimes, Senator, **6**, 198.
- Grimm, Baron, anecdote of Garrick and Préville counterfeiting drunkenness, **2**, 103; his style in French, 167; on Lessing's Fables, 197; story of the Parisian showman, **5**, 24.
- Grimm, Jacob, on the mandrake's groan, **1**, 275; on the survival of heathen divinities, **2**, 327; on the raven, 348; on the use of broomsticks by witches, 356.
- Groceries in Cambridge, **1**, 63.
- Grouse cooked before the fire, **1**, 26.
- Growing-pains, **6**, 17.
- Groyne, The, or Coruña, **1**, 66.
- Guarini, Jonson on, **4**, 301 n.
- Guelfs and Ghibellines in Italy in 13th century, **4**, 129.
- Guest, Edwin, verse-deaf, **3**, 346.
- Guides in Italy, **1**, 134; their office deadly to sentiment, 141; demands for more payment, 175; delightful absence of, in an American town, 185.
- Guido's Hours, Spenser's verses compared to, **4**, 310.
- Guido Novello da Polenta, **4**, 135, 136.
- Guinicelli, Guido, **4**, 229 n.
- Guizot, on the measure of endurance of the United States, **6**, 207.
- Gunpowder, **2**, 325.
- Gurowski, Count, on absence of singing-birds in America, **3**, 212.
- Guy-Fawkes procession succeeded by the Cornwallis, **1**, 77.
- Guyot, **3**, 240.
- Gymnasium, **1**, 186.
- Habbakuk cited as an instance of corporeal deportation, **2**, 353.
- Haddock, James, apparition of, **2**, 322.
- Hadrian, his villa in Tivoli, **1**, 136; why he took three days to reach it from Rome, 153.
- Hagedorn, **2**, 146; Lessing's regard for, 219.
- Hailes, Lord, on Dunbar's *Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins*, **4**, 269.
- Hair, Washington Allston's, **1**, 73.
- Hair-cutting in the Cambridge barber's shop, **1**, 61.
- Hakluyt's Voyages, the language of, **3**, 5; **4**, 92.
- Hale, E. E., on orioles' nests, **3**, 210.
- Hales, Mr., on the date of Spenser's birth, **4**, 284 n.
- Hall, Bishop, Milton's quotation of lines from, **4**, 94; his *Satires*, 94 n.
- Hallam on Oldham, **3**, 177.
- Halliwell, J. O., editor of Marston's works, his poor English, **1**, 262; his vague notions of Latin, 264; his bad editing, 264; his emendations and explanations, 272.
- Halpine, Major C. G., on Spenser's Rosalinde and on his wife, **4**, 285 n.
- Halpine, Rev. N. J., his *Oberon*, **4**, 285 n.
- Hamlet, dallies with suicide, **2**, 161; on ghosts, 326. *See also*, Shakespeare.
- Hammond, Mr., proclaims the accession of King Cotton, **5**, 22.
- Hamon's picture of wise men before a Punch's theatre, **2**, 104.
- Hancock, Gov., **1**, 65; J. Quincy's account of a dinner by, **2**, 294.
- Hard-headed people, **6**, 95.
- Hares, Dr. Kitchener's dictum on, **2**, 260.
- Harney, Gen., **5**, 62.
- Harrington, Sir John, on poetry, **4**, 409.
- Harris, Sir Nicholas, his life of Chaucer, **3**, 294.
- Harrison, General G., **2**, 31.
- Hartington, Marquis of, at a public ball in New York, **3**, 242; presented to President Lincoln, 242 n.
- Harvard, John, **6**, 82, 141.
- Harvard, the sloop, **1**, 68.
- Harvard College, uniform of the scholars, **1**, 56; Massachusetts Hall occupied by Burgoyne's soldiers, 56; the Latin oration, 57; "parts" for Exhibition or Commencement rehearsed in the Gravel-pit, 57; the impressiveness of the President and Governor, 58; the wood fires of former days, 69; the Triennial Catalogue, 82; President Kirkland, 83; functions of the President in old times, 84; the college fire-engine, 88; the Med. Facs., 88; fight between the students and the soldiers on training-day, 92; books presented by Sir K. Digby, **2**, 57; its influence on Boston, 290; the

- education given in the last century, 299; President Quincy, 305; Quincy's History of, 307.
- HARVARD COLLEGE:** address on the 250th anniversary, Nov. 8, 1886, 6, 137-180; the character and purpose of its founders, 140, 143, 147, 178; the feelings of her sons in returning to their Alma Mater, 141; the strictness of its early means, 141; the founders commemorated in the words of the Preacher, 141; the significance of the anniversary, 142; the founding of the College secured the intellectual independence of New England, 143; the circumstances of its foundation, 143; the influence and character of the clergy, 144; the training of Indian youth one object, 147; the professors underpaid and overworked, 149; condition of the college in 17th and 18th centuries, 149; the students safe from any contagion of learning at some former periods, 150; the *Gratulation* and the Whitfield controversy as indications of the state of learning, 151; the chief service of the College to hand down the tradition of Learning, 151; letters not neglected for mere scholarship, 152; influence of the College on the character of New England, 153, 169; the new learning from Germany early welcomed here, 156; the conditions of American life not then favorable for the larger university life, 157; the recent expansion of the College toward filling University functions, 157, 167; the mottoes of the College, 157; the functions of a university and the aims of teaching, 158, 174, 176; the teaching of the Humanities to remain predominant, 160, 177; the elective or voluntary system, 161, 178; danger of pushing it too far in the present transitional condition of the College, 162; the administration of President Eliot, 167; advanced courses to be pushed on into the post-graduate period, 168; fellowships desirable foundations, 168; influence of the College on preparatory schools, 171; its duty to produce cultured men, 171, 174, 177; its general purpose to train the faculties for the duties rather than the business of life, 176; welcome to the guests present, 179.
- Commencement,** the dinner, 1, 2; the great Puritan holiday, 56; 6, 154; Lewis, the brewer's handcart, 1, 61; the two town constables at the meeting-house door, 64; respect paid the governor, 65; its sights and pleasures described, 79; old graduates at, 82.
- Harvard Washington Corps, Pres. Kirkland's remark to, 1, 87; its vagaries, 88.
- Harvey, Gabriel, 4, 129, 155; introduced hexameters, 277; Nash on his hexameters, 278 n; his self-absorption, 285 n; the finer passages in his prose, 285 n.
- Harvillier, Jeanne, her trial for witchcraft, 2, 380.
- Hastiness in writing, 3, 120 n.
- Hastings, Lord, Dryden's verses on the death of, 3, 107.
- Hatem Tai's tent, 3, 225.
- Hathaway tried for witchcraft, 2, 11.
- Hats, Prof. P.'s collection, 1, 93; bandit hats, 178.
- Haunted houses, Pliny's story of, 2, 323. *See also*, Apparitions.
- Havelok, 3, 313.
- Hawkes, Henry, on the cities of Mexico, 1, 110.
- Hawkins, Sir John, account of the Canaries, 1, 110.
- Hawkins, Sir Richard, 2, 290.
- Hawkwood, Sir John, 3, 248.
- Hawthorne, the unwilling poet of the Puritanism of the past, 1, 365; a descendant of one of the Witchcraft judges, 2, 21; his intuitive appreciation of New England life, 51; his treatment of hereditary vices, 125; the *Marble Faun*, 125; the character of Mr. Dimmesdale in the *Scarlet Letter*, 265; on England, 3, 231; *also*, 223.
- Haydon, on the lofty purpose of Wordsworth and Keats, 1, 225; on Keats's depression, 228; on his eyes, 241; quoted, 2, 196.
- Haying, in northern Maine, 1, 11; in the Seboomok meadows, 30.
- Haynes, John, on the dissolution of the Rump Parliament in 1653, 2, 34; on a catechism denying the divinity of Christ, 39.
- Hazlitt, W. C., his *Early English Poetry* in the "Library of Old Authors," 1, 254; edition of Webster, 282; examples of blunders, 283; his edition of Lovelace, 304; his absurd emendations, 304; his notes, 309; his rash conceit, 319; his lack of taste and discrimination, 320; further instances of his incapacity, 321; his insinuations against Wright and Warton, 329; his editorial method characterized, 347; his edition of Herrick, 320; on Ritson's editing, 331; on Spenser's allegory, 4, 321; *also*, 85.
- Head-dress of Italian peasant women, 1, 171.

- Heathen, Dante on their state after death, **4**, 248.
- Heathen divinities. *See* Pagan divinities.
- Heather, its American substitute, **1**, 13.
- Hebrew literature, **4**, 234.
- Hector, **2**, 104, 296.
- Hecuba, **2**, 21.
- Heeren, Bancroft's translation of, **6**, 157.
- Heidegger, Dr., **2**, 300.
- Heine, his airy humor, **2**, 90; his style, 167; his want of inward propriety, 170; his cynicism, 229; turned the Gods of Greece to good account, 327; on the nature of woman, 358; his profound pathos, **6**, 56; influenced by Spanish romances, 116; the first English translation of, 157; hated the Romans for inventing Latin grammar, 164; *also*, **1**, 364; **3**, 259, 301.
- Helen of Kirconnel*, Wordsworth's version compared with the original, **4**, 403 n.
- Helen of Troy, **1**, 32.
- Helias, St., **2**, 368 n.
- Hell, imagined as the reverse of Heaven, **2**, 349; Dante's picture of, **4**, 175; Marlowe on, 175.
- Heminge and Condell, **3**, 20.
- Henchmen, **1**, 176.
- Henry IV. of France at Ivry, a Roman policeman compared to, **1**, 216; compared with Lincoln in character and circumstances, **5**, 190.
- Henry VII., Emperor, his expedition to Italy, **4**, 133; his death, 134.
- Henry IX. of England, so-called, **2**, 274.
- Hens. *See* Fowls.
- Heraclitus, **1**, 165.
- Herakles and Samson, **2**, 134.
- Herbert, George, character of his poems, **1**, 254; *also*, **4**, 21 n; quoted, **6**, 165.
- Herbert of Chisbury, Lord, on riding, **4**, 351.
- Herder, **2**, 169, 219; his love-letters, 208.
- Heredity, **3**, 315; influence of, in great men, **4**, 362; makes all men in a sense coeval, **6**, 138. *See also*, Ancestry.
- Heresy, Selden on, **2**, 216; Dante had no sympathy with, **4**, 244.
- Heretics, Lessing on, **2**, 199; the persecution of, 374.
- Hermit, who became a king, a mediæval apologue, **5**, 1.
- Hermit instinct strong in New England, **1**, 89.
- Hero, Carlyle's picture of, **2**, 93; a makeshift of the past, 106; eagerly accepted by a nation, **5**, 93.
- Herodias in legend, **2**, 358.
- Herodotus, Plutarch on, **3**, 231.
- Heroic treatment demanded for trifling occasions, **5**, 198.
- Heroism the touch of nature that makes the whole world kin, **6**, 42.
- Herrick, Hazlitt's edition of, **1**, 320; *also*, **2**, 223; **4**, 369; — *On Julia's Petticoat*, **3**, 124.
- Hertzberg, Wilh., Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury-Geschichten*, **3**, 291, 298.
- Hesperides, apples of, true poems compared to, **4**, 266.
- Heylin, Dr., on French cooks, **3**, 119.
- Heywood's *Four P. P.* quoted, **1**, 337; his *Woman killed with kindness* quoted on the condition of prisons in old England, 159.
- Hibbins, Mr., **2**, 27.
- Higginson, T. W., preacher and soldier, **2**, 286.
- Highlanders. *See* Scotch Highlanders.
- Hildesheim, Bishop of, his demon-cook, **2**, 366.
- Hill, Aaron, Pope's correspondence with, **4**, 52.
- Hippocrene, **4**, 89.
- Hippolytus*. *See* Euripides.
- Hirschel lawsuit, Lessing employed as a translator in, **2**, 187.
- Historians, Raleigh's warning to, **3**, 54; **4**, 319 n.
- Historic continuity, its effect on national individuality, **6**, 223.
- Historical composition, the value of anecdote and scandal in, **2**, 284; the modern fashion of picturesque writing, **4**, 64; the value of contemporary memoirs, 65; **5**, 241, 242; the so-called dignity of, often mere dullness, **4**, 66; the Johnsonian swell of the last century, 67; importance of good taste in, 67; value of personal testimony, **5**, 118; distorted by bad logic and by the style of the writer, 120; truth of circumstance combined with error in character, 121; the annalist's method, 121; the "standard" histories, 121; the poet's view of, 123; the historical romance, 123; the epic style, 123; the partisan method, 124; the forlorn-hope method, 124; the *a priori* fashion, 124; the ancient method, 277.
- Historical insight, **2**, 111.
- Historical romance, **5**, 123.
- History, its key to be found in America, **1**, 53; without the soil it grew in, its shortcomings, 113; cycles in the movement of, 191; **5**, 126; its humors, **2**, 22; the hero in, 74; Carlyle's scheme of, 99; the place of popular opinion in, 99; events gain in greatness from the stage on which they occur, 275; its field generally limited, 278; made largely by igno-

- ble men, **4**, 288; manipulation of, **5**, 97; contemporary evidence to be taken with caution, 119; no absolute dependence to be placed upon, 125; difficulty of forecasting events, 125; coincidences and parallelisms of history, 126; the hand of Providence in, 127; man's part in the operations of the loom of time, 130; the changes in the moral and social conditions of nations, 131; historical characters compared with imaginary, **6**, 81; the teaching of, 91; its periods short in comparison with geological antiquity, 138; the study of, 177; Burke's view of, 197; *also*, **4**, 258. *See also*, Antiquity; Biography; Past.
- Hoar, Senator, **6**, 204.
- Hobbes, **4**, 80; Pope's Essay on Man distilled from his *Leviathan*, 36.
- Hodgson, Capt., **2**, 7.
- Hogan Moganships, **1**, 145.
- Hogarth, **3**, 66; compared to Chaucer, 354; compared with Fielding, **6**, 62.
- Hogs, Gilbert White's observations on, **3**, 193.
- Hohenzollerns, Carlyle's admiration for, **3**, 247.
- Holbein, **3**, 233.
- Holda, **2**, 358.
- Holding up the hand, Mr. Hazlitt on, **1**, 345.
- Holmes, Dr. O. W., **4**, 61; **6**, 48, 83; on physiological changes, **3**, 224.
- Holt, Chief-Justice, belief in witchcraft, **2**, 11.
- Holy Grail, legends of, **4**, 231.
- Homekeeping youths, **1**, 49; **6**, 167.
- Homeliness of Anglo-Saxon poetry, **3**, 335.
- Homer, Keats should have translated him, **1**, 289; Chapman's reverence for, 290; the different conceptions of his metre, 291; fond of associations, 292; his verse compared to the long ridges of the sea, 292; his simplicity, 293; passage of Spenser suggested by, **4**, 331; inferences as to contemporary manners unsafe, 340 n; his homeliness, **5**, 242; his imaginative power, **6**, 52; *also*, **2**, 150; **3**, 25, 365; **6**, 227.
- Dryden on, **3**, 120 n.
- Chapman's translation. *See* Chapman's Homer.
- Odyssey*, **3**, 310; **4**, 414; the true type of the allegory, 321.
- Homeric translation. *See* Translation of Homer.
- Honesty, intellectual, **2**, 198.
- Honor, sense of, Davenant's line on, **3**, 139 n.
- Hood quoted, **5**, 172.
- Hooke, William, **2**, 44; letters on English affairs, 38, 43.
- Hooker, **4**, 80.
- Hooks and eyes, the millennium dependent on, **1**, 362.
- Hope, Pope's lines on, **4**, 41.
- Hopkins, the witch-finder, **2**, 364.
- Hopkins, Bishop, **5**, 220.
- Horace, sentiment of, **2**, 252; a poet and a soldier, 286; Pres. Quincy's fondness for, 299; Dryden's translation of Ode iii. 29, **3**, 114; the one original Roman poet, 305; Daniel's amplification of Integer Vitae, **4**, 282; *also*, 266.
- on hastiness in writing, **3**, 120 n; on winter, 265; on the punishment of crime, **5**, 128.
- Horizon at sea, **1**, 105.
- Horrible and Terrible, Aristotle's distinction between, **1**, 280.
- Horse and Hattock, witch formula, **2**, 358.
- Horse in green spectacles, the public compared to, **4**, 7.
- Horses, indication of senility in, **1**, 137; those who have to do with them the same everywhere, 146; in pagan mythology, **2**, 348.
- Horseback riding at Tivoli, **1**, 136.
- Horse-chestnuts in blossom, **1**, 54.
- Hortop, Job, account of the Bermudas, **1**, 110.
- Hospitality, of woodmen, **1**, 38; reciprocal, 160; in earlier days, **2**, 295.
- Hot weather, satisfaction of seeing the thermometer higher than ever before, **3**, 196.
- Hotels, lack of comfort in American, **1**, 19; **2**, 71; the touters of rival hotels, **6**, 211.
- Houghton, Lord, on the parentage of Keats, **1**, 219, 221; on the effect of the *Quarterly* article on Keats, 228.
- House-moving in America, **1**, 125.
- Howell, James, **6**, 82; cured by Sir K. Digby, **2**, 56.
- Howells, William D., **6**, 82.
- Howes, Edward, his letters to J. Winthrop, Jr., on alchemy and other mysteries, **2**, 46; urges tolerance, 49; on the true shape of Christ, 50; a true adept of the hermetic philosophy, 50.
- Howgall, Francis, **2**, 64.
- Hroswitha, treated the legend of Theophilus, **2**, 329.
- Hubb, Herr, his so-called comic poem, **2**, 169.
- Huc, Father, **3**, 9.
- Hudson, the railway king, **6**, 31.
- Huet, **1**, 51.
- Hughes, Mr., on Spenser's measure, **4**, 329 n.
- Hughes, Thomas, **3**, 243.
- Hugo, Victor, his idea of the poet's function, **2**, 157; the representative of sentimentalism, 268; on Shake-

- speare, **3**, 63; his *Marion Delorme*, **6**, 120 n.
- Human imperfection, **2**, 109.
- Human life, Dante on the course of, **4**, 213.
- Human mind, Dante on its double use, **4**, 186.
- Human nature, the most entertaining aspect of nature, **1**, 114, and the most wonderful, 376; hard to find, but good company, 118; its ideal, **2**, 92; Carlyle's disdain of, 109; its modification by habit, 136; the attempts to make it over, 264; its sameness, **3**, 231; the gratis-instinct, 255; Dante on its double end, **4**, 220; as an element in the making of history, **5**, 126; the instinct that embodies and personifies abstract conceptions, **6**, 104. *See also*, Life; Man; Soul.
- Human reason, Carlyle's contempt for, **2**, 95.
- Human wit limited in quantity, **6**, 35.
- Humanitarianism, **6**, 23 n.
- Humbung, the English vocabulary incomplete without, **1**, 196.
- Hume, David, **2**, 225 n.
- Hume, the spiritualist, **2**, 391 n.
- Humor, Yankee humor displayed in the Cornwallis, **1**, 77; the German idea of its essence, **2**, 90; without artistic sense degenerates into the grotesque, 90; its essential, 98; of a heavy man, **4**, 66; essential to the composition of a sceptic, 160; sense of, **6**, 7.
- of Shakespeare and other writers, **1**, 278; **6**, 56; of Emerson, **1**, 355; of Carlyle, **2**, 88, 89, 98; of Cervantes, 90; **6**, 119, 129; of Heine, **2**, 90; of Rabelais, 90; of Richter, 165; instances of, in Dante, **4**, 208 n; wanting in Spenser, 319; absence of the sense of, in Wordsworth, **6**, 110. *See also*, American, English, French, German humor.
- Humors, more common in old times, **1**, 95.
- Humors of character, preserved by an academic town, **1**, 89.
- Humors of history, **2**, 22.
- Humorist, the, never quite unconscious, **6**, 56.
- Hunt, Gov., on the main object of the Constitutional party of 1860, **5**, 27.
- Hunt, Leigh, **3**, 354; his critical method, 332.
- on Keats's sensitiveness with regard to his family, **1**, 220; on America, **3**, 247; on Spenser, **4**, 329 n; on Wordsworth's eyes, 394; on Fielding, **6**, 57.
- Huon of Bordeaux, **2**, 295.
- Hurd, **2**, 225.
- Hurry, of American life, **1**, 7; of the present day, 58; characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon, 131.
- Husking-bee, **1**, 186.
- Hutchinson, Mrs., reference to, in Edw. Howes's letter, **2**, 50.
- Hypochondria, **2**, 321.
- Iago. *See* Shakespeare — *Othello*.
- Ice on the trees, **3**, 279; Ambrose Philips's description of, 280.
- Iceland, Northmen in, **3**, 320.
- Ideas, the world's stock limited, **2**, 97.
- Ideal, the, in Emerson's lectures, **1**, 355; in Thoreau's writings, 379; in literature, difficulty of attaining, **4**, 281; needed as a basis for the real, **6**, 21; as real as the sensual, 81; the ideal and the real, **3**, 66.
- Ideal life constantly put forward by Emerson, **1**, 358.
- Ideal truth, art a seeking after, **1**, 379.
- Identity, **3**, 224.
- Ignorance, a certain satisfaction in, **1**, 118.
- Illexes at Subiaco, **1**, 183.
- Illumination, Chaucer's pictures of life compared to, **3**, 325.
- Images, Dryden's use of, **3**, 129; of Langland, 333.
- Imagination, the fine eye of, needed by a traveller, **1**, 46; driven out by the public school, 107; wanting in modern travellers, 110; faith in, preserved by the Roman Church, 195; essential to enduring fame, **2**, 79; not to be increased by study and reflection, 84; in a Scotchman, 107; its action as a mythologizer, 318; its higher creative form, **3**, 30; distinguished from fantasy, 32; its laws to be most clearly deduced from Greek literature, 32; its secondary office as the interpreter of the poet's conceptions, 40; common-sense sublimed, 270; Collins on, **4**, 3; ignored by French criticism, 9; Wordsworth the apostle of, 27; attempts at, by an unimaginative man, 66; must not be furnished with a yard-stick, 101; the life-giving power in poetry, 267; its office in literature, 284; its full force found only in three or four great poets, **6**, 52; works of, have a usefulness higher in kind than others, 52; its uplifting and exhilarating effect on the moral and intellectual nature, 52; the bestower of originality and genius, 53; in lower natures, combines with the understanding and works through observation, 53; its importance taught by Coleridge, 71; the world of, 81, 94; homeliness of, in popular tales, 85; applied to the domain of politics by Burke, 197. *See also*, Fancy.

- its quality in Keats, **1**, 243; in Thoreau, 369; Wordsworth's lack of, **2**, 78; of Burke, **81**; of Shakespeare, **81**; **3**, 354; **4**, 99; of Goethe, **2**, 85; of Carlyle, **90**, 101; of Dryden, **3**, 113; of Chaucer, 354; of Milton, **4**, 99; of Dante, 223; of Spenser, 343; of Fielding, **6**, 55; of Coleridge, 72; shown in Cervantes' characters, 127.
- Imaginative creations, **6**, 128.
- Imaginative literature, its place in a public library, **6**, 94.
- Imaginative work, its inner quality accessible only to a heightened sense, **6**, 123.
- Imagines of the Romans, a substitute proposed, **1**, 317.
- Imitation, **1**, 280; produces the artificial, not the artistic, **2**, 127; the fascination of, 128; the great poets not susceptible of, **3**, 37. *See also*, Originality.
- Immigration, its dangers, **6**, 205.
- Immortality of fame, **3**, 278.
- Imola, Benvenuto da. *See* Benvenuto.
- Impartiality impossible in time of civil war, **5**, 131.
- Imperfection of human nature, **2**, 109.
- Impracticable, the, always politically unwise, **5**, 196.
- Imprecations of an Italian guide, **1**, 173.
- Impressions, their value, **3**, 29.
- Impressment, **2**, 301.
- Incarcation, The, **4**, 255.
- Incongruities of life, **1**, 86.
- Inconsistency, Petrarch the perfection of, **2**, 253; of Dryden, **3**, 123; a necessary incident of political life, **5**, 196.
- Inconstancy, Webster's lines on, **1**, 281.
- Indecision of character exemplified in Hamlet, **3**, 76.
- Independence, of Lessing, **2**, 186; developed in a democracy, **6**, 31.
- INDEPENDENT IN POLITICS, THE PLACE OF THE: address Apr. 13, 1888, **6**, 190-221; defined, 194; his office to denounce abuses in political methods, 201; needed to moderate between parties, 212; the reform of parties to be wrought by, 213; denounced for advocating civil service reform, 215.
- Indian Mutiny, **3**, 238.
- Indian nomenclature, **1**, 14.
- Indians, American, anecdote of one who preferred hanging to preaching, **1**, 78; their capture advocated in order to exchange them for negroes, **2**, 42; as servants in early New England, 43; royal and noble titles applied to, by the early settlers, 68; Williams's opinion of them, 69; he declines to sell them coats and breeches, 69; become romantic as they cease to be dangerous, 70; the legend of the werewolf found among, 362; supposed to worship the Devil, 376; the Puritan conversion of, **3**, 218; Pope's lines on, **4**, 40; in Harvard College, **6**, 147.
- Indignation, **3**, 230.
- Individualism of modern literature, **2**, 158.
- Individualization makes sympathy more lively, **5**, 242.
- Indirectness, its office in descriptive writing, **3**, 42.
- Inevitable, arguments with, **6**, 17.
- Infallibility, **2**, 22.
- Infernal hierarchy, **2**, 327.
- Influence abiding after death, **2**, 230.
- Ingenuous, our youth no longer so, **1**, 112.
- Inhabitiveness, the author's, **1**, 51.
- Injustice, **5**, 253.
- Inns, in Palestrina, **1**, 158; in Olevano, 173; cleanliness of Italian inns due to English travellers, 199; of Cambridgeport, 70. *See also*, Taverns.
- Inquisition of the 13th cent. the beginning of systematic persecution for witchcraft, **2**, 374.
- Inscriptions, Assyrian and others, **1**, 40; the mad desire to decipher them, 318.
- Insight, **3**, 301.
- Inspiration, **3**, 62; **4**, 386; handy for a political speaker to have, **6**, 191; more convenient than knowledge, 192.
- Instinct, Pope's lines on, **4**, 37.
- Institutions too changeable to preserve the memory of statesmen, **1**, 40.
- Intellectual ancestry, **1**, 241.
- Intellectual dyspepsia of the transcendental movement, **1**, 362.
- Intellectual natures, **1**, 229.
- Intensity in Wordsworth's higher moods, **4**, 405.
- Intensity of phrase affected by modern poets, **2**, 82.
- Intolerance itself to be tolerated, **2**, 67.
- Invention, **3**, 300.
- Ireland, Alex., *Book-lover's Enchiridion*, **6**, 78.
- Ireland, in 16th century, **4**, 286; independence of England not desired, **5**, 68; its economic condition in Arthur Young's time, 228.
- Irishmen, prejudice against, in the North, **5**, 231; anecdote of an Irishman newly arrived in New York, **6**, 25; on the worn-out farms of Massachusetts, 25; in America, 219; their

- fidelity and self-sacrifice toward Ireland, 219. *See also*, Fenians.
 Irish pride of ancestry, 2, 19.
 Iron, man's sympathy for, 1, 115.
 Irony of Hamlet, 3, 83.
 Irrepressible conflict, the, 5, 32.
 Irresolution, the consequences of, displayed in Hamlet, 3, 91.
 Irving, Edward, Carlyle on his singularities, 2, 107.
 Irving, Washington, divined and illustrated the humorous side of early New England history, 2, 5; his *Knickerbocker* imitates Cervantes, 6, 135.
 Isaiah, 4, 160; 6, 113, 192.
 Islands in Mooshead Lake, 1, 26.
 Israelites and the Pilgrims compared as to influence on the future, 2, 1.
 Italian acting, 1, 175.
 Italian beggars. *See* Beggars, Italian.
 Italian dialects, Dante's work on, 4, 154.
 Italian exiles drawn to Dante, 4, 169.
 Italian gardens, 1, 215.
 Italian history in relation to Dante, 4, 237.
 Italian inns, their cleanliness due to English travellers, 1, 199.
 Italian language, Dante's use of, 4, 154.
 Italian literature, the *Convito* the first Italian prose, 4, 155.
 Italian peasants, 1, 144, 163; reading of, 156; in out of the way towns, 176.
 Italian politics illustrated by the feeling at Tivoli against Rome, 1, 133.
 Italian prima donna, her careless pity for her American audience, 3, 239.
 Italian prosody, elisions, 4, 107.
 Italian towns, individuality of, 1, 213; rivalry of, 2, 278.
 Italian vetturini, 1, 146.
 Italian women, 1, 144, 170; their unsophisticated consciousness, 188.
 Italians, their lavishness of time, 1, 131; their disputes, 165; on the mail-packet from Leghorn to Civita Vecchia, 168; pleasure in escaping a payment, 169; their feeling toward the Pope, 205; their way of doing nothing, 207; a vociferous people, 213. *See also*, Romans.
 ITALY, LEAVES FROM MY JOURNAL IN, 1, 100 - 217; reasons for visiting, 123; its peculiar magnetic virtue, 123; its special charm to Americans, 124; pleasures of living in, 124; the sense of permanence, 125; compared to a beautiful woman, 125; ancient and modern writers on, 125; guides, 134, 141; the ruins adopted by nature, 139; church-going, 143; railroads, 150; reading, 156; picturesqueness of the inaccessible mountain towns, 172; Roger Ascham's opinion of, 4, 26.
 Ivy, on the Villa of Hadrian, 1, 136; at Subiaco, 183.
 J. F. = John Foster.
 J. H. = John Holmes.
 Jacie, Henry, letter on the destruction of Bores by the King of Sweden, 2, 65.
 Jack, Col., 3, 263.
 Jackson, General, 1, 72; 5, 70.
 Jacobitism compared to modern superstition, 2, 317.
 Jacob's ladders, climbers on, easily get a fall, 1, 142.
 Jamaica, 5, 319; the imagined negro plots in 1865, 2, 375; lessons of emancipation in, 5, 303.
 James I. of England convinced of the reality of witchcraft, 2, 352.
 James II. of England, 5, 321.
 Janus Bifrons, 1, 99.
 Jarley, Mrs., 4, 74.
 Jean Paul. *See* Richter.
 Jefferson, Thomas, 2, 75, 236; J. Quincy's reminiscences of, 294; devised the theory of strict construction, 5, 148.
 Jehan d'Arras. *Melusine*, 3, 361.
 Jehoiada-boxes, 1, 79, 167.
 Jellaladeen, a parable of, 6, 21.
 Jerome, St., believed in a limitation of God's providence, 1, 41.
 Jesuits, popular opinion of, in Italy, 1, 144.
 Jews, their national egotism found sympathy in Puritan England, 4, 83; the prejudice against, 6, 18; sincerity of converted Jews tested, 213.
 Job, Book of, 3, 261.
 John XXII., Pope, 4, 141.
 John, King of Saxony, on Dante's politics, 4, 150; on Dante's Catholicism, 153.
 John of Leyden, 3, 62.
 JOHNSON, ANDREW, PRESIDENT, ON THE STUMP, 5, 264-282; his allusion to his own humble origin, 264; his speech on Feb. 22, 1866, 267; his loyalty, 267; his mistaken conception of the President's office, 267; his right to his own opinions, 272; should not appeal to the people against their representatives, 272; the meetings to "sustain" him, 273; he assumes sectional ground, 274; fictitious address to a Southern delegation, 277; the clown of the Philadelphia convention circus, 285; relation to the principles of the Convention, 288; incidents of his speech-making tour, 289; Pontifex Maximus at the canonization of S. A. Douglas, 292; his

- appearance as a mountebank, 285;
290, 294, 296; the unsavory memory
of his career, 297; his arguments
on the questions of reconstruction,
297; threatens the forcible suppres-
sion of the Congress, 301; his policy,
306; his agrarian proclamation,
306; hailed by the South as a
scourge of God, 308; his foolish
policy awakens the people to the
gravity of the situation, 313; his
misconceptions and delusions, 313;
his policy compared to that of
James II., 321; his earlier attitude
toward the South, 323; impeach-
ment deprecated, 326.
- Johnson, Reverdy, 5, 289; on the re-
lations of England and America in
1869, 3, 252.
- Johnson, Dr. Samuel, his verse, 1,
246; dined heartily for threepence,
2, 184; poverty of, 187; compared
with Lessing in learning and critical
power, 191, 229; his critical power,
3, 140 n; his *Life of Dryden*, 140 n;
theory of genius, 146; epigram from
Spenser, 4, 290 n; his views of
America compared with Burke's,
6, 197; *also*, 3, 101, 125, 201, 316,
363; 4, 303; 6, 90.
- on love, 2, 208; on Rousseau, 235; on
Shakespeare, 3, 19; on Milton's *Ly-*
cidas, 110; on Dryden, 140; on Pope,
4, 54; on his *Essay on Man*, 38; on
his sincerity, 49; on Burke, 6, 71.
- Joinville, 2, 274.
- Joke, Francis Sales' way of taking
everything, 1, 97; the Chief Mate's
appreciation of, 116, 117.
- Jones, Paul, picture of his fight in the
Bonhomme Richard in the Cam-
bridge barber's shop, 1, 62.
- Jongleurs, 3, 361.
- Jonson, Ben, characterized, 1, 277;
heavy without grandeur, 279; his
critical power no help to him as a
dramatist, 2, 222; his lyrics, 223;
his dramas compared with Shake-
speare's, 3, 58; Dryden on, 143, 185
n; his verse, 346; his debt to Spen-
ser, 4, 305 n; *also*, 2, 286; 3, 101;
4, 306, 343.
- on Bacon, 1, 360; 3, 16; on Marston's
neologisms, 8; on Shakespeare, 10 n,
16; on the decline of eloquence, 16;
on rhymesters, 156; on Spenser's
children, 4, 296 n; on his allegory in
the *Faery Queen*, 314; on Guarini's
language, 301 n; on Donne, 6, 113.
- Jourdain de Blaivies, passage quoted,
3, 311.
- JOURNAL IN ITALY AND ELSEWHERE,
LEAVES FROM, 1, 100-217.
- Journalism, 4, 375; 6, 8. *See also*,
Newspapers.
- Juan, Don, 1, 107.
- Jubinal, Achille, 3, 264.
- Judæa, its place in the world of
thought, 6, 174.
- Judas, the apostle, 5, 120.
- Judd, Sylvester, his *Margaret*, 3, 274.
- Judges chosen by election in some
states, 6, 30.
- Judgments, divine, made to work both
ways, 2, 66.
- Judgments, human, Shakespeare on,
3, 152; a man judged by his little
faults, 1, 85.
- Junius, Dr. Waterhouse's observations
upon, 1, 96.
- Justice, in the soul and in action, dis-
tinguished by Rousseau, 2, 249;
sense of, 117; more merciful than
pity in the long run, 4, 251.
- K. = Pres. Kirkland.
- Kalewala, 2, 152, 319.
- Kannegiesser, translation of Dante, 4,
145.
- Kansas, 5, 39.
- Kant, on the accumulating records of
history, 6, 142.
- Katahdin, Mt., seen from Moosehead,
1, 13.
- Kay, Sir, 2, 154.
- Keane, Counsellor, his pig, 2, 275.
- Kearney, Commodore, 5, 62.
- KEATS, JOHN, 1, 218-246; his parents,
219; his love for his mother, 221;
education, 221; his school-fellows'
opinion of him, 222; Mrs. Grafty's
reminiscences of, 223 n; apprenticed
to a surgeon, 223; reads Spenser,
223; his sympathy for Chatterton,
224; his other reading and first pub-
lication, 224; *Endymion* (1818) and
the abuse it received, 225; his case
compared with Milton's, 225; his
ambition to be a great poet, 225,
227; his suffering from the vulgar-
ities of the reviews, 226; his name
unfortunate, 227; the effect of the
fortunes of his book on him, 228;
in Haydon's painting room, 228;
the moral and physical man per-
fectly interfused, 229; his own opin-
ion of *Endymion*, 230; on his own
method of work, 231; his character
and manner of working compared
with Wordsworth's, 231; first symp-
toms of his hereditary disease, 232;
his passion for a woman, 233; his
own description of his passion, 233;
his betrothal, 235; his work from
1818 to 1820, 235; the first hemor-
rhage and the journey to Italy, 236;
letters quoted expressing his des-
pair at the separation from Miss
—, 236, 238; at Rome, 238; the
end, 239; his grave, 240; his per-
sonal appearance, 240; criticism of
his poetry, 241; superabundant in

- language, 241; originality, 241; compared with Wordsworth and Byron, 242; his poetic imagination, 243; an example of the Renaissance, 244; power of assimilation, 244; self-denial in use of language, 244; power of poetic expression, 245; his poems a reaction against the barrel-organ style of poetry, 245; the greatness and purity of his poetic gift, 246; should have translated Homer, 289; learned to versify from Chapman, 296; denunciation of 18th century style, 3, 98; studied Dryden's versification, 99 n; his style compared with Milton's, 4, 86; Spenser's influence upon, 352; *also*, 3, 326.
- on the imagination, 1, 243; on Chapman's Homer, 4, 294; on continuations of an ancient story by great poets, 312; on a line of Shakespeare's, 409 n.
- Endymion*, 1, 225, 230, 244; 3, 354; — *Hyperion*, 1, 235, 244; — *Lamia*, 235, 244; — *Lyrical Ballads*, 226; — *Odes*, 244; — *Ode to a Grecian Urn*, 4, 371 n; — *Sonnets*, 1, 244.
- Kemble, John, in *Macbeth*, 3, 70.
- Kent, men of, their tails, 1, 112.
- Kepler, 3, 16.
- Ketch, Jack, 3, 176.
- Kidd, Capt., 5, 119.
- Kineo, Maine, 1, 18.
- Kineo, Mount, 1, 13; ascent of, 39.
- Kings, Browning's picture of a king, 2, 109; 6, 27; their Sacred Majesty ridiculed by the Dutch, 3, 234.
- Kirke, Edmund, probably the same as Spenser, 4, 301 n.
- Kirkland, President, his character, 1, 83; his appearance, 84; unsuited to his time, 85; anecdotes of him, 86; his manner of praying, 88.
- Kleist, Lessing on, 2, 173; Lessing's friendship with, 197.
- Klopstock, 2, 219; Lessing on, 176; Wordsworth's interview with, 4, 379.
- on the German Muse, 2, 183.
- Klotz, Lessing's criticism of, 2, 200.
- Knebel, his judgment of Frederick the Great, 2, 113.
- Knight of Courtesy*, Hazlitt's and Ritson's editions of, 1, 331.
- Knights of Labor, 6, 183.
- Knives, the Chief Mate's appreciation of, 1, 114.
- Knowledge, elements of, 1, 48; that which comes of sympathy, 3, 49.
- Knowledge and learning, 2, 186.
- Know-Nothings, 5, 318.
- Knox, John, 2, 265.
- Kobes I., Emperor, his speeches compared to Pres. Johnson's, 5, 289.
- König, Eva, Lessing's wife, 2, 207.
- L. S. = Leslie Stephen.
- Labor, cheap, importation of, 6, 217.
- Labor-saving contrivances, 2, 279.
- La Bruyère on witchcraft, 2, 387.
- La Chevette, Hermitage of, 1, 375.
- La Fontaine, 2, 200.
- Lager-beer and brandy, the Dutchman's distinction, 1, 127.
- Laing, editor of Dunbar's works, 4, 271.
- Lake, its uncanny noises on a freezing night, 3, 290.
- Lamartine, 2, 236, 266, 271; 3, 262; resents the subsidy granted him by the Senate, 2, 258; autumn compared to, 3, 259.
- Lamb, Charles, his criticism of the English dramatists, 3, 29; his defence of the comedy of the Restoration, 150; Wordsworth's friendship with, 4, 386; *also*, 1, 249, 251; 3, 280; 5, 133.
- on Webster, 1, 280; on Spenser, 4, 326; on Wordsworth, 390.
- his *Essays of Elia*, 6, 82.
- Lamb, Charles and Mary, 4, 363 n.
- Lamennais on Dante, 4, 163.
- La Motte Fouqué. *See* Fouqué.
- Lamps, alchemists', Pope's teaching in the *Essay on Man* compared to, 4, 37.
- Lance-rests, 1, 328.
- Land, Henry George's theories of, 6, 35.
- Land companies. *See* American land companies.
- Land speculations, Rufus Davenport's, in Cambridgeport, 1, 71.
- Landino, comment on Dante, 4, 156.
- Landor, Walter Savage, 2, 123; his *Gebirus Rex*, 129; his pseudo-classicism, 135; his style compared with Milton's, 4, 86; his blank-verse, 399.
- on great men, 3, 104; on mingling prose with poetry, 144; on Spenser, 4, 352; on Wordsworth, 401; on Napoleon III., 5, 125; on Coleridge's criticism of *Don Quixote*, 6, 126.
- Landscape, described by Chaucer, 3, 261, 357; value of human associations in, 6, 139. *See also*, Nature; Scenery; Views.
- Landscape-gardeners of literature, 3, 189.
- Langland, 3, 324; compared with Chaucer, 330; his verse, 332; charm of his language, 335.
- Piers Ploughman*, reprinted in the "Library of Old Authors," 1, 252; its language, 3, 11; as an example of popular poetry, 334; cited, 1, 326; 2, 328.
- Language, growth of, 1, 373; 3, 328; power of, 1, 245; must catch its fire from the thought behind it, 2, 122; its purity dependent on veracity of

- thought, 270; value of its living quality, **3, 6**; meaning of a "living" language, **6**; intimate relations of language and thought, **6**; its subtle relations with verse, **13**; made classic by great poetry, **17**; its office in poetry higher than in prose, **46**; playing upon words characteristic of some passions, **52**; Renan on the development of, **184 n**; life may be breathed into, by a great poet, **307**; compared to the soil, **312**; what a man of genius may do for it, **328**; of rustics, **341**; reformed by precept rather than by example, **4, 21**; Bellay on innovations in, **347**: when archaisms are permissible, **347**; value of the study of, **6, 93**; literature not to be sacrificed to, in teaching, **152**; the teaching of, **164**. *See also*, Accent; Apostrophe; Assonance; Spelling; Words and expressions.
- Languages, foreign, power of acquiring, **2, 161**.
- Langue d'oïl, its advantages over the Provençal, **3, 312**.
- Lapland night, the genius of Washington Allston compared to, **1, 77**.
- Larks. *See under* Birds.
- Lassel cited on the meaning of *flutes*, **1, 310**.
- Lassels, Richard, on Italy, **1, 126**.
- Last looks, **1, 149**.
- Latin, its use by Chaucer's cock, **2, 182**.
- Latin elements in English, **1, 261**; **3, 12**; more familiar than the Teutonic, **14 n**.
- Latin literature, **3, 305**; the later poets, **306**. *See also*, Classics.
- Latin quotations sure to be applauded, **1, 57**.
- Latin verse-composition, **2, 129**.
- Latini, Brunetto, **1, 315**; **3, 309 n**; **4, 208**; Dante's tutor, **123**.
- Laud, Archbishop, **2, 29**.
- Laughter, of President Felton, **1, 67**; of the Snow brothers, **68**; of Francis Sales, **97**; that of X, the Chief Mate described, **117**.
- Laura, **3, 302**.
- Laurels of the Villa d' Este, **1, 132**.
- Law as a training for politics, **5, 193**.
- Laws, Spinoza on the strength of, **5, 37**.
- Laws of nature personified and worshipped of old, **1, 137**.
- Lead, proper for "Essays," **6, 99**.
- Leaders not provided for every petty occasion, **2, 110**.
- Leaders who do not lead, **6, 220**.
- Lear, **1, 281**.
- Learning, Lessing on its uses, **2, 190**; of Johnson and Lessing compared, **191**; suspected of sorcery in the Middle Ages, **332**; made more accessible by short cuts to information, **6, 84**; *also*, **4, 160**. *See also*, Education; Knowledge; Pedantry; Scholarship.
- Learning and wisdom, Dante distinguishes between, **4, 200**.
- Leaven, **4, 72**.
- LEAVES FROM MY JOURNAL IN ITALY AND ELSEWHERE, **1, 100-217**.
- Lecky, W. E. H., on witchcraft, **2, 377 n**; on Peter of Abano, **381 n**; on Wierus, **382**.
- Leclerc, Victor, **3, 298**; on Dante, **4, 212 n**.
- Lecturers, **3, 256**.
- Lecturing, **1, 349**.
- Lee, joint-author with Dryden of *Edipus*, **3, 128**.
- Legends, their growth and their fate, **2, 359**; of saints and martyrs, **4, 230**.
- Legislation must be based on the understanding and not on the sentiment, **5, 195**.
- Leisure, needed in travelling, **1, 122**; of the beggar aristocracy, **3, 225**.
- Leisure class, a bane if it have not a definite object, **6, 220**.
- Lenz, **2, 207 n**.
- Leo. VII., Pope, believes the story of the actor changed into an ass, **2, 361**.
- Leonardo, Aretino, on the date of Dante's birth, **4, 122**; on the death of Dante's father, **123**.
- Leopoldo, guide in Tivoli, **1, 130**; his early education, **142**.
- Lepidus, his account of the crocodile, **2, 52**.
- Le Sage, **3, 58**; *Gil Blas*, **6, 65**.
- LESSING, G. E., **2, 162-231**; his fame survives the assault of four German biographers, **163**; his great qualities, **171**; the defence of Truth always his object in writing, **174**; his intellectual ancestry, **175**; characterized by force rather than cleverness, **176**; the sources of his inspiration, **177**; his ancestry, **180**; his relation to his father, **182**; his early education, **182**; at Leipzig, **183**; at Wittenberg and Berlin, **184**; his Anacreontics and sermons at home, **184**; his letters home, **185**; his early scepticism, **185**; his cheerful self-confidence, **185**; his independence, **186**; arranges Rüdiger's library, **186**; his early range of scholarship, **186**; his life pure, **187**; his poverty, **187**; his relations with Voltaire in the Hirschel lawsuit, **187**; at Wittenberg in 1752, **189**; his father's efforts to put him into a profession, **189**; his mind always growing and forming, **189**; compared with Johnson in learning and critical power, **191**; in Berlin at literary work from 1752 to 1760, **191**; his cheerful, manly nature, **192**; shown by ex-

- tracts from his letters, 192; compelled to literary drudgery at times, 193; his attitude toward it, 194; his opinion of dramatic writing, 195; defends his neglecting poetry for philosophy, 196; the training of his critical powers, 196; the firmness and justice of his criticisms, 197; his friends in Berlin, 197; his restlessness there, 198; his passion for truth, 198; his friends' lack of appreciation of his position, 199; removes to Breslau in 1760, 202; a member of the Acad. of Sciences of Berlin, 202; his feeling toward the Seven Years' war, 203; his patriotism shown in the warfare against French taste, 204; his life in Breslau, 204; refuses to bind himself to an official career, 205; returns to Berlin, 205; becomes theatrical manager at Hamburg, 206; appointed librarian of the Duke of Brunswick, 207, 210; his betrothal, 207; letter from Boie relating to, 207; his wife and their love-letters, 208; her death and Lessing's sorrow, 208; his life at Wolfenbüttel, 211; troubled with hypochondria, his cure for it, 212; his controversial writings, 212; his craving for sympathy in his later years, 213; his last letter to Mendelssohn, 213; his attitude toward theology, 214; alike indifferent to clerisy and heresy, 217; condition of contemporary German literature, 217; his debt to French literature, 221; his influence on European literature, 222; the source of his critical power, 224; the quality of his genius, 224; his power of dramatic construction, 225; a great prose writer, but not a poet, 226; his minor poems, 227; his continuous growth, 227; the life-giving quality of his thought, 228; his supreme value as a nobly original man, 229; his value to German literature, 229; a seeker after Truth, 230; Coleridge's debt to, 6, 71; *also*, 1, 364; 3, 179.
- on Kleist, 2, 173; on the critic, 174; on his own failures, 174; on Gottsched, 175; on Klopstock, 176; on Voltaire, 188; on his own education, 190; on the use of learning, 190; on different ways of earning one's living, 194; on his hack-work, 194; on the value of character, 195; on the cultivation of poetry, 196; on Thomson, 196; on Smollett's *Roderick Random*, 197; on heretics, 199; on the "whole truth," 199; on his criticism of Kotz, 200; on his wife's death, 209; on bearing grief, 210; on orthodoxy and sectarianism, 215; on his debt to Diderot, 224 n; on his *Dramaturgie*, 228; on seeking after truth, 230; on Shakespeare, 3, 67; on French drama, 162; on Pope, 4, 56.
- Macaulay on, 2, 173; Goethe on, 225 n, 231.
- Anti-Gölze pamphlets*, 2, 173, 213; — *Contributions to the History and Reform of the Theatre*, 176, 194; — *Dramaturgie*, 206, 221, 228; — *Emilia Galotti*, 213, 224, 226; — *Fables*, Grimm on, 197; *Laocöon*, 195, 204, 228; — *Letters on Literature*, 172, 196, 197, 221; — *Lillo*, 177; — *Minna von Barnhelm*, 204, 224, 225 n; — *Miss Sara Sampson*, 177; — *Nathan the Wise*, 215, 225 n, 226, 227; — *Young Scholar*, 183.
- Lessing, Stahr's Life of, a panegyric rather than a biography, 2, 172; furnishes little material for a comparative estimate, 173; its faults and shortcomings, 176; its excellences, 178; Evans's translation, 178, examples of mistranslation, etc., 179; further references to Stahr's work or opinions, 175, 188, 189, 202, 203, 204, 206, 210, 211, 214, 217, 221, 222, 227.
- Letcher, Gov., 5, 83.
- Letters, 4, 50; misdirected, men compared to, 3, 226.
- Le Verrier, discovery of Neptune, 5, 120.
- Levy, 4, 317 n.
- Lewis, the brewer in Cambridge, 1, 60; on Commencement days, 80.
- Lexington, 1, 191; 3, 223.
- Lexington, battle of, reminiscences of survivors of, 5, 119.
- Leyden, John of, 2, 10.
- Liberal education, why so called, 3, 32.
- Liberal studies, 6, 160, 177.
- Liberty, Puritan ideas of, 2, 10, 75; Dante on, 4, 244; its principles cannot be sectional, 5, 37. *See also*, Freedom.
- Librarians, modern, contrasted with earlier, 6, 83.
- LIBRARY OF OLD AUTHORS, Review of, 1, 247-348; the authors reprinted, 251; the editing, 255; general lack of accuracy, 260.
- Libraries, 3, 248.
- LIBRARIES, BOOKS AND; address at Chelsea, Dec. 22, 1885, 6, 78-98.
- Libraries, public, their office to spread the pleasures of scholarship and literature, 6, 80; an instrument of the higher education, 83; modern improvements in the administration of, 83; the books which should be found in, 90; their contribution to the welfare of the state, 97; as monuments of their donors, 98.

Lichen, yellow, on stone walls, **1**, 164.
 Lichtenberg, on ancient literature, **3**, 36; on Garrick in Hamlet, 69.
 Lictors, educational, **1**, 264.
 Lieberkühn, his theory of translation, **2**, 179.
 Life, its essential underlying facts alone make character, **1**, 218; demanded by the transcendental reformers, 364; as the subject of poetry, **2**, 150; its dual nature, 267; the sentimentalist's view of, 267; Dryden's line on, **3**, 167; continually weighing us, 230; Chaucer's and Dante's views of, 323; the voyage of, **4**, 237. *See also*, Human nature; Society.
 Liffert, **2**, 207 n.
 Lights in the windows, **3**, 221, 288.
 Lighthouse compared to Carlyle's teaching, **2**, 109.
 Lillo's *George Barnwell*, Lessing influenced by, **2**, 177.
 Lilly, his dramatic works reprinted in the "Library of Old Authors," **1**, 254; *also*, **4**, 8.
 Limbo of Dante, **4**, 248.
 Limiters, Chaucer's satire on, **3**, 334.
 LINCOLN, ABRAHAM, **5**, 177-209; his Americanism, **2**, 280; **5**, 192; his reply when Gen. Grant was accused of drinking too much, **3**, 149 n; his reception of the Marquis of Hartington, 242 n; his administration sure to be conservative, **5**, 42; his character and experience, 43; his inaugural in 1861, 81; his reply to McClellan's charge of lack of support, 112; his policy compared with McClellan's, 164; his moderation and considerate wisdom, 172; compared with Cromwell, 173; his wary scrupulousness followed by decided action, 173, 188; the qualities which make him a great statesman and ruler, 183; the peculiar difficulties of his task, 184, 187; his policy tentative to begin with, 188; knows how to seize the occasion when it comes, 188; has kept his rather shaky raft in the main current, 189; in character and circumstances compared with Henry IV. of France, 190; no apostasy or motives of personal interest to be charged against him, 191; contemptuously compared to Sancho Panza, 191; his personal appearance, 192; his previous training and experience, 193; his debate with Douglas, 194; his policy to aim at the best, and take the next best, 194; his want of self-confidence and slow but steady advance, 195; his tenderness of nature without sentimentalism, 195; his rule to

be guided by events even at the cost of delay, 195, 205; his attitude toward slavery, 197; his policy in emancipation dictated by prudence, 198; his original policy in regard to the war, 202; the tone of familiar dignity in his public utterances, 206; his confidence in the right-mindedness of his fellow-men, 206; his character appeals even to the most degraded, 207; his policy that of public opinion based on adequate discussion, 207; absence of egotism, 207; the representative American, 208; the most absolute ruler in Christendom on the day of his death, 208; the feeling called out by his death, 209, 244; his power rested on honest manliness, 209; reluctant to overstep the limits of precedent, 260; always waited for his supplies to be on hand, 271; his definition of democracy, **6**, 20; popular homage of, 32; a truly great man, 209; *also*, **5**, 116.

Linguists, **3**, 337.

Lintot, the bookseller, **4**, 53.

Literary fame. *See* Fame, literary.

Literary history, the mere names of, **2**, 78.

Literary popularity. *See* Popularity, literary.

Literary sense of Chaucer, **3**, 331.

Literary simplicity, **2**, 82.

Literary vanity, **1**, 315.

Literature, absorbed unconsciously, **1**, 113; its staminate flowers, 366; immediate popularity and lasting fame contrasted and discussed, **2**, 78; importance of naturalness, 83; its higher kinds dependent on the character of the people and age, 132; the favorable conditions for, 148, 153; its present tendency to lose national characteristics, 152; its drudgery as a profession, 193; the periwig and the tie-wig style, 218; the vitality of true literature, **3**, 33; its idols become companions as one grows older, 56; distinguished from rhetoric, 301; Byron's opinion in regard to execution, **4**, 42; the heroic age of the folio past, 61; the distinction of Form and Tendency, 165; the Christian idea contrasted with the Pagan, 234; value of character in, 261; the quality of nationality in, 270; **6**, 115; difficulty of attaining the ideal, **4**, 281; the everlasting realities in, 284; source of its vigor, 293; of the 18th century, 266; is its importance overvalued? **6**, 52; the office of creative genius in, 54; the difference between realistic and typical characters, 56; its benignities, 80; the conditions of permanence

- in, 107; the four cosmopolitan authors since Virgil, 108; the German word *dichtung*, 117; the deeper qualities of books not accidental, 123; characters drawn by observation and those created by the imagination, 127; the pedigrees of books, 136; not to be sacrificed in the teaching of language, 152; the place of Plato and Aristotle in, 166; dependent on a national consciousness and a sense of historic continuity, 223; necessary to a nation's equipment, 224; the products of isolation in, 225; its place in the general estimation, 226; an index of civilization, 226; its influence on the course of history, 227; the record of a nation's life, 228. *See also*, American, English, European, French, German, Greek, Italian, Latin, Modern, and Spanish literature; — *also*, Allegory; Classics; Drama; Fables; Fabliaus; Fairy tales; Fiction; Historical composition; Imagination; Poetry; Provincialism; Satire; Style.
- Littleton, case of pretended possession in, in 1720, 2, 391.
- Lobster, Doctor, and the perch: fable in verse, 1, 22.
- Lochinvar, 2, 152.
- Loggers of Maine, 1, 15.
- Logging on a frosty morning, 1, 18.
- Lombard churches, 1, 205.
- London, 1, 191.
- London smoke, 3, 287.
- Loneliness of the Ponte Sant' Antonio near Tivoli, 1, 140. *See also*, Solitude.
- Longevity, 2, 309; competition in, among college graduates, 1, 82; its usual character, 2, 291.
- Longfellow, his *Hiawatha*, 2, 132; — *Epimetheus*, 3, 125 n; his lectures on Dante, 4, 147; translation of the *Divine Comedy*, 147, 193 n; — *Wreck of the Hesperus*, 272.
- Longing, 1, 189.
- Longinus 1, 173; references to, in mediæval literature, 325.
- Loom of time, man's share in its operations, 5, 130.
- Lord of Misrule, procession of, Carlyle's view of life, 2, 98.
- Lord's prayer, test whether a witch could repeat it, 2, 341.
- Lorenz, Mdle., Lessing's passion for, 2, 184, 187.
- Loudon, Masson's reference to, 4, 73.
- Loudon, the witchcraft troubles at, 2, 371.
- Louis, St., of France, 2, 274.
- Louis XIV. of France, his influence on French literature, 4, 293 n; Thackeray's picture of, 5, 121.
- Louis XVI. of France, mourning for, 1, 98.
- Louis Napoleon, 6, 31.
- Louis Philippe, 5, 127.
- Louisiana, her proposal to secede absurd, 5, 48.
- Louisiana purchase, J. Quincy's opposition to, 2, 302.
- Loupgarou, 2, 359, 362.
- Lovat, Simon, *Lord*, 3, 71.
- Love, Keats's description of his own state, 1, 233; Webster's and Butler's lines on, 282; Dryden's lines on, 3, 167; Dante's conception of, 4, 210; Spenser's lines on, 291; his idea of, 316.
- Love of country, 2, 112; 5, 177. *See also*, Patriotism.
- Love at first sight, 2, 299.
- Lovelace, reprinted in the "Library of Old Authors," 1, 255, 303; his three short poems which deserve to live, 302; the rest of his work worthless, 303; compared with Frynne, 2, 71.
- Love-letters of Lessing and Eva König, 2, 208.
- Lowell, Charles Russell, moose-hunting, 1, 37.
- Loyalty, to natural leaders, 2, 110; the sentiment developed into a conviction by the War, 5, 213. *See also*, Patriotism.
- Lucian, on apparitions, 2, 322 n; story of the stick turned water-carrier, 357.
- Luck, its share in ephemeral success, 2, 79.
- Lucky authors, 1, 302.
- Lucretius, 6, 112; on the sea, 1, 100; his invocation of Venus, 3, 306; quoted, 4, 257 n.
- Ludicrous, the Germans less sensible of, 2, 168.
- Ludlow, 2, 8.
- Lumberers' camp, life in, 1, 45.
- Lumbermen, require ready-made clothes, 1, 39. *See also*, Woodmen.
- Lure, Guillaume de, burned at Poitiers in 1453, 2, 381.
- Luther, on the children of witches, 2, 363; story that he was the son of a demon refuted by Wierus, 363 n; story of a demon who was *famulus* in a monastery, 367; *also*, 2, 125, 171; 3, 318; 4, 82.
- Luxembourg, Mârchal de, the Devil flies away with him, 2, 333.
- Lycanthropy, common belief in, 2, 361.
- Lycaon, King, 2, 360.
- Lyceum, as a substitute for the old popular amusements, 1, 78.
- Lydgate, 3, 329, 345; his *Craft of Lovers* quoted, 348.

- Lying to a witch on her trial justifiable, **2**, 379.
- Lyman, Theodore, his seat at Waltham, **2**, 294.
- Lynch-law not to be tolerated in affairs of government, **5**, 72.
- Lyndhurst, Lord, **2**, 276.
- Lyon, Dr., alchemist, **2**, 48.
- Lyrical cry, **3**, 144 n.
- Lytton, Baron. *Pelham*, **2**, 106.
- Macaulay, his estimate of Lessing, **2**, 173; his sources, 284; his historical method, **5**, 124.
- McCLELLAN, GEN., HIS REPORT, **5**, 92-117.
- McCLELLAN OR LINCOLN? 1864, **5**, 152-176; popular enthusiasm for and confidence in, 94; failure of the Peninsular campaign, 94, 107; publishes his Report as a political defence, 95, 111, 113; his reputation compared to a rocket, 95; his delay and indecision, 96, 104; his military duties interfered with by political aspirations, 98, 101; the flattery heaped upon him, 99; his judgment affected thereby, 99; hampered by his great reputation, 100; undertakes to advise the President on political matters, 100; growth of his egotism, 101; the personal sacrifices and patriotism of which he boasts, 102; repeated demands for reinforcements, 103, 108; his exaggerated estimate of the opposing forces, 104, 107; his plan of campaign impracticable, 105; his conceptions vague, 106; his expectations of the Peninsular campaign disappointed, 106; his adhesiveness of temper, 107, 109; his retreat well conducted, 108; the effect on the spirit of the army, 109, 113; no lack of support from the Administration, 111; his unbecoming charges on it, 111; his deficiencies as a leader, 112; his qualifications as a Presidential candidate, 113, 154; the platform of 1864 dangerous ground for him, 157; his disingenuous treatment of the platform, 160, 174; his policy compared with Lincoln's, 164; his theories in regard to coercion confused, 165; has not been called upon to put his political theories into practice, 165; his attitude toward slavery, 166; fails to realize the changes wrought by the war, 166, 171; views on the conduct of the war, 168; his policy of conciliation futile, 170, 176; office not to be given him as a poultice for bruised sensibilities, 171; relation to the Democratic party, 174; his election would be an acknowledgment of the right of secession, 175.
- McDonald of Glenaladale, **5**, 325.
- McDowell, Gen., his silence under slanderous reproach, **5**, 97; his part in the Peninsular campaign, 107, 108.
- Macer, **5**, 126.
- MacHeath, **5**, 157.
- Machiavelli, **1**, 92; **2**, 220, 260; **4**, 85; on the recalling of the exiles to Florence in 1311, 134 n; on the natural term of governments, **5**, 35; on three kinds of brains, **6**, 177.
- Madden, Sir Frederick, **1**, 330.
- Madison on the right of coercion, **5**, 148.
- Maecenas, villa of, at Tivoli, **1**, 132.
- Maelstrom in Worcester's Geography, **1**, 112.
- Mätzner on editors, **1**, 319.
- Maggot in the brain, **1**, 362; **2**, 64, 156.
- Magic, its power to give life to inanimate things, **2**, 357; the Devil's school of, in Toledo, 368.
- Magnanimity, **5**, 307.
- Mahomet in the *Divine Comedy*, **4**, 244.
- Maidstone, John, **2**, 36.
- Mail-bag, lost from a stage-coach, **1**, 9.
- Mail-carrier in Italy, **1**, 163.
- Maine dew, **1**, 19.
- Maistre, Joseph de, **3**, 115; on Protestantism, **2**, 6; on what a man should know, **6**, 158.
- Majorities, government by, Pollard's objections to, **5**, 134.
- Makeshifts, the American habit of acquiescing in, **6**, 206.
- Malahoodus River, moose-hunting on, **1**, 34.
- Malediction, Italian, the universal, **1**, 172.
- Malone, **1**, 251; **3**, 19; **5**, 120; verse-deaf, **3**, 346.
- Malory, Sir Thomas, **2**, 126; his language, **3**, 12 n.
- Malta, secured by Britannia from the caldron of war, **1**, 120.
- Malvern Hill, battle of, **5**, 108.
- Man, reflected in Nature, **1**, 377; Dante's conception of his highest end, **4**, 166; the shortness of his days, **6**, 139. *See also*, Human nature; Society; Soul.
- Mandrake's groan, superstitions concerning, **1**, 275.
- Manetti on the date of Dante's birth, **4**, 122.
- Manias, Sir K. Digby's cure for, **2**, 56.
- Mankind wiser than the single man, **3**, 315.
- Manliness exemplified in Fielding, **6**, 67.
- Mannerism and style, **3**, 38.

- Manners, their decline bewailed by R. M. the Cambridge constable, **1**, 65; in Boston in earlier times, **2**, 290.
- Manners and morals under the Restoration, **3**, 151.
- Marathon, **1**, 191.
- Mare's nests the delight of the German scholar, **2**, 163.
- Marie de France, **3**, 313, 325; her treatment of final and medial *e*, 344.
- Marini, **4**, 8.
- Marlay, Chief Justice, congratulates Dryden, **3**, 186 n.
- Marlborough, **1**, 362, **2**, 114.
- Marlowe, characterized, **1**, 277; his unrhymed pentameter, **3**, 8; his language, **18**; **4**, 104 n; his verse, **3**, 346; **4**, 108, 110; on hell, 175. *Faustus* quoted, **4**, 93 n; *Tamburlaine*, 105; passage taken from Spenser, 332 n; quoted, 327.
- Maroons, of Surinam, **5**, 231.
- Marriage ceremony, the "with all my worldly goods," etc., **5**, 9.
- Marseillaise, **4**, 355.
- Marshall, Chief Justice, anecdote of, **4**, 409.
- Marston, his dramatic works reprinted in the "Library of Old Authors," **1**, 254; the editor's poor English, 262; his general incompetency, 265-276; sometimes deviates into poetry, 267; his *Sophonisba*, 267; on slavery, 268; a midding poet, 271; his neologisms, **3**, 8.
- Martial on snow, **3**, 275.
- Martin, Martin, his Description of the Western Islands, **1**, 109.
- Martin's thermometer, **3**, 196.
- Martineau, Miss, on Wordsworth's conversation, **4**, 400 n.
- Martyrs, **5**, 326; their stakes the mile-stones of Christianity, 10.
- Marvell, **3**, 150; **4**, 159; Horatian ode, and Elegy, **3**, 116; on the Dutch, 233; on Charles I., **4**, 70.
- Marvellous, the, its fascination, **2**, 390.
- Mary, Queen of Scots, in the *Faery Queen*, **4**, 319 n.
- Maryland, Pinckney's denunciation of slavery in the Assembly in 1789, **5**, 141.
- Masculine quality of Emerson, **1**, 351, 358, 366.
- Mason, George, of Virginia denounced slavery, **5**, 144.
- Mason, Capt. John, **2**, 57; his account of the dissolution of Parliament in 1655, 33; on disorders of Cromwell's soldiers, 36.
- Mason, William, his *Caractacus* and *Elfrida*, **2**, 134.
- Mason and Dixon's lines not to be drawn in the world of ethics, **5**, 6.
- Masquerades, English, **1**, 199.
- Massachusetts, compared with Virginia in its early institutions, **2**, 15; the village school-house described, 16; her loyalty to the general government, **5**, 69; at the Philadelphia convention of 1860, 285; abolition of property qualification for suffrage, **6**, 10; financial probity of the state, 11; Irish peasants on the worn-out farms of, 25; its condition at the time of the founding of Harvard College, 143; the religious enthusiasm and business sagacity of its founders, 146; their public spirit shown in their care for education, 147; her debt to the graduates of Harvard, 156. *See also*, New England.
- Massachusetts Hall. *See* Harvard College.
- Massinger, Coleridge on his versification, **3**, 340.
- Masson, his edition of Milton. *See* Milton — *Poetical Works*.
his *Life of Milton*, its length and slow accomplishment, **4**, 58; the large space occupied by contemporary history, 60; unessential matters treated with too great detail, 62; compared to Allston's picture of Elijah in the Wilderness, 63; his impertinent details of a pseudo-dramatic kind, 65; his unsuitable familiarity, 67; instances of vulgarity of treatment, 68; of attempted humor, 69; his style stilted in speaking of every-day matters, 71; his inappropriate figures, 71; his unhappy infection with the *vivid* style, 72; his minuteness of detail and diffuseness, 74; discusses the possibility of Milton's military training, 76; his fondness for hypothetical incidents, 78; the valuable matter in his volumes, 79; lacks skill as a storyteller, 80; his analyses of Milton's prose writings and of the pamphlets written against him, 85; failure to draw a living portrait of Milton, 87; on Milton's versification, 105.
- Mate, Chief, anecdotes of X, **1**, 114.
- Material prosperity, danger of an absorption in, **6**, 227.
- Materialism, **4**, 18; the occasion of both superstition and unbelief, **2**, 396; Dante on, **4**, 205 n.
- Mather, Cotton, bewailed the attractions of the tavern, **1**, 78; his part in the witchcraft delusion, **2**, 11; the *Magnalia*, its vices of style and of thought, **3**, 139 n; his pedantry, **6**, 150; *also*, **1**, 252, 351; **2**, 73.
- Mather, Increase, on the Devil, **1**, 257.

- Remarkable Providences*, reprinted in the "Library of Old Authors," 1, 252; the poor English of the editor, 256; his inaccuracies, 257, 260.
- Maundeville, Sir John, cited, 1, 335.
- Mauzy, Alfred, on the origin of the witches' Sabbath, 2, 347; on witchcraft, 387.
- Mayflower, Ship, 5, 119.
- Mazarin, Cardinal, put a stop to exorcism, 2, 371; his motto, 5, 188.
- Mazeppa, 1, 136.
- Meaning of words, intensity supposed to be gained by mere aggregation, 1, 90.
- Mechanics, American, 6, 93.
- Med. Facs. of Harvard College, 1, 88.
- Medal, the world compared to, 1, 98.
- Medieval art demands revolting types, 4, 175.
- Medieval literature, Ovid's influence on, 3, 301.
- Medicine, Bacon on the quack in medicine compared to the practical man in politics, 6, 192.
- Mediocrity, the true Valhalla of, 1, 317.
- MEDITERRANEAN, IN THE, 1, 113-120; phosphorescence in, 104; the hot nights, 116; the Chief Mate's opinion of, 116.
- Melanchthon on a possessed girl's knowledge of Virgil, 2, 366.
- Memoirs, contemporary, their value, 2, 284.
- Memory, 6, 70; quickened in process of drowning, 1, 75; whipping a benefit to, 3, 95.
- Ménage, his warning against catching fire, 3, 263.
- Mendelssohn, Lessing's friendship with, 2, 197; Lessing's last letter to, 213.
- Mendez Pinto, Ferdinand, his exaggerations, 1, 46.
- Mendicancy, a liberal profession in Rome, 1, 208. *See also*, Beggars.
- Mephistopheles, his opportunity, 1, 78; connection with Vulcan, 2, 348.
- Mercer, Rev. Dr., of Newport, R. I., gives a bust of Coleridge to Westminster, 6, 68.
- Mercy, Langland on, 3, 333.
- Merlin, 1, 32, 328; 2, 362.
- Mermaid, autobiography of, imagined, 2, 262.
- Merman, Webster's story of a merman bishop, 1, 110.
- Merope*. *See* Arnold, Matthew.
- Metaphor and simile, 4, 21.
- Metaphors not arguments, 6, 17; extravagant metaphors in French dramatic poetry, 3, 159. *See also*, Similes.
- Metaphysicians, 3, 194.
- Meteoric showers, 1, 201.
- Meteorological ambitions of country dwellers, 3, 196.
- Meteorological observations, 3, 197.
- Methuselah, the possibilities of his biography considered, 4, 59.
- Metre. *See* English prosody; Verse.
- Mexican War, 6, 212.
- Mexicans, conversion of, by the Spaniards, 3, 361.
- Mexico, 2, 273.
- Michael Angelo, the character of his work, 1, 197, 205; his sonnets compared with Petrarch's, 2, 256; his Dawn, 4, 105; his chamber in Florence, 120; *also*, 1, 61; 3, 123; 4, 114, 119, 141.
- Michelet, 5, 120.
- Michigan, the case of her secession supposed, 5, 54.
- Middle Ages, sympathy with, 1, 212; imaged in the *Divina Commedia*, 4, 159.
- Middling poets, 1, 271.
- Military genius, its two varieties, 5, 95.
- Military leader, sympathy for a defeated, 5, 92; idealized by his country, 93.
- Millington, Miss, on the Prince of Wales's motto, 3, 14 n.
- Millstones, the sympathy of kindred pursuits compared to, 1, 118.
- Milo, 3, 356.
- Milor in partibus*, 1, 124.
- MILTON, 4, 58-117; his figure invested with a halo of sacredness, 67; his personal dignity, 67, 101; his sense of his own greatness, 69; his manner little affected by other English poets, 75; believed himself set apart for a divine mission, 78, 82; his work as a controversialist desultory and ephemeral, 80; essentially a doctrinaire, 81; his training poetical and artistic, 81; identified himself with his controversies, 82, 84, 115; the finer passages in his prose, 82; his prose valuable for its style and inspiration, 83; his egotism in sympathy with the national egotism of the Jews, 83; literature with him an end not a means, 85; the formation of his style, 85; the circumstances of his life, 87; peculiarities of his vocabulary, 88; his spelling, 89; his avoidance of harsh combinations of sounds, 94; his use of the *sh* and *ch* sound, 95; a harmonist rather than a melodist, 96; his greatness in the larger movements of metre, 97; his use of alliteration, assonance, and rhyme, 97; not always careful of the details of his verse, 99; his imagination diffuses itself, not con-

- denises, 99; his fondness for indefinite epithets, 100; he generalizes instead of specifying, 100; his occasional use of abrupt pauses, 101; his respect for his own work, 101; the sustained strength of his beginnings, 102; parallel passages in earlier authors, 104; his versification, 105, 309 n; **3**, 346; his elisions, **4**, 106, 111 n; his few unmanageable verses, 110; his love of tall words, 113; the most scientific of our poets, 114; his haughty self-assertion, 114; his self-consciousness, 116; his grand loneliness and independence of human sympathy, 117; Marlowe his teacher in versification, **1**, 277; the abuse bestowed upon, compared with the treatment of Keats, 225; Roger Williams's notices of, as secretary of the Council, **2**, 31; his evident sympathy with Satan, **3**, 3; quality of his imagination, 40; his manner, 41; instance of reduplication of sense, 50; studied by Dryden, 109, 136; he dies in obscurity, **4**, 1; his literary opinions reflected in Phillips' *Theatrum Poetarum*, **2**; translated, 6; regarded theology above poetry, 18; in Florence, 120; had read Dante closely, 146; a student of Spenser, 302, 305 n, 333; gradual change of his opinions, 315 n; the movement of his mind compared to the trade-wind, 402; his work saved by its style, **6**, 64; *also*, **2**, 30, 221, 226; **3**, 12 n, 106, 150, 185, 337; **4**, 25, 150; **6**, 140, 145.
- compared with Shakespeare, **3**, 40; with Burke in political wisdom, **4**, 81; with Dante, 162, 171; with Dante in the circumstances of his life, 87; in character, 116.
- on fugitive and cloistered virtue, **2**, 249; on Dryden, **3**, 114; on winter, 267; on decorum in poetry, **4**, 2; on the collectors of personal traditions of the Apostles, 63; on his morning exercise, 76; on his political writings, 85; on Spenser, 207 n, 314; on union with truth, 255 n.
- Dryden on his rhymes, **3**, 110; Pope on, **4**, 116; Masson's Life of. *See* Masson.
- Areopagitica*, **4**, 83; a plea rather than an argument, 84; *Comus*, the Lady (Countess of Carbery) described by Taylor, 47; source of the "airy tongues," 105; *Lycidas*, 29, 97; Dr. Johnson on, **3**, 110; Masson on the "two-handed engine," **4**, 71; verse suggested by Spenser, 307 n; *Nativity Ode*, 97; *Paradise Lost*, Keats's comments on, **1**, 224; its feeling of vastness, **4**, 99, 101; its didactic parts, 102; compared with the *Divine Comedy*, 162; *Paradise Regained* quoted, 84 n; *Poetical Works*, Masson's edition, 87; his discussions of Milton's language and spelling, 88, 102; the notes very good, 104; the treatment of versification, 105; *Samson Agonistes*, 92 n, 114; its success as a reproduction, not imitation of Greek tragedy, **2**, 133; *Solemn Music*, **4**, 97; — *Sonnet to Cromwell*, **3**, 116; — *Sonnet, When the Assault was intended on the City*, **4**, 69.
- Mimetic power, **2**, 240.
- Minerva, in a Paris bonnet, **1**, 190.
- Miniato, San, the annual procession of monks to, **1**, 106.
- Minnesingers, **3**, 304; sunrise on land compared to, **1**, 106.
- Mirabeau, Carlyle's picture of, **2**, 89.
- Mirabeau, Bailli of, on the English political constitution, **6**, 33.
- Mirror for magistrates*, **4**, 278.
- Mishaps, like knives, to be taken properly, **1**, 43.
- Misprints, **1**, 263; examples of, in Marston's works, 265, 273.
- Mississippi steamboats, **2**, 130.
- Missouri compromise, **5**, 142, 145.
- Mobs, **5**, 134; the only many-headed tyrant, 301; Napoleon's rules for dealing with, 84; in democratic cities, **6**, 23.
- Mock-heroic, the, **4**, 32.
- Models, artists', **1**, 178.
- Moderation, **5**, 321.
- Modern civilization, the reaction against its softening effect, **5**, 250.
- Modern life more prosaic, **2**, 285.
- Modern literature, individualism of, **2**, 158; its extravagance, **3**, 37; its self-consciousness, 292; its true origins among the Trouvères, 309; the representation of common sense its office, **4**, 46.
- Mohra, Sweden, witches of, in 1670, **2**, 342.
- Molière, his comic power, **1**, 278; accused of plagiarism, **3**, 300; influenced by Cervantes, **6**, 135; *also*, **3**, 58, 64.
- Mommsen gives us the beef-tea of history, **2**, 284.
- Monarchy, Dante on universal, **4**, 151; the force of prestige and sentiment in, **5**, 184.
- Money, its use abjured by some zealous transcendentalists, **1**, 362; of a sincere man, **2**, 243; effect of the credit system upon, **4**, 118 n.
- Monomania of Don Quixote, **6**, 130.
- Monopodes, **1**, 111.
- Monotony of the sea, **1**, 101.
- Monroe, Fortress, **5**, 326.
- Monroe doctrine to be put in practice by the South, **5**, 323.

- Monstrosities heralded as wonders, **3**, 21.
- Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley, **1**, 361; Pope's relations to, **4**, 51.
- Montaigne, in his tower, **1**, 107; his objects in travel, 122; in Rome, 213; his range narrow but deep, 365; his originality, 373; the Ecclesiastes of the 16th cent., **2**, 97; the first modern writer and critic, 221; his confessions, 261; disbelieved in witchcraft, 387; his credulity, 396; his *Essays*, **6**, 90; *also*, **1**, 249, 350, 376; **2**, 260, 284; **3**, 16, 56, 72, 78; **6**, 166.
- on Italy, **1**, 126; on suicide, **3**, 141 n; on France, 231; on education, **6**, 152.
- Carlyle on, **2**, 85.
- Montefiore, Sir Moses, requests that prayers be offered in Palestine for President Garfield's recovery, **6**, 44.
- Montesquieu, **6**, 14.
- Monticelli, **1**, 145.
- Moon, Chapin's line on, **1**, 105; its "scoffing away" the clouds, 119; in winter, **3**, 289; responsible in some degree for the weather, 315.
- Moonlight on the sails at sea, **1**, 104.
- Moonrise, on the Penobscot, **1**, 33; in winter, **3**, 289.
- Moore, Edw., *Gamester*, the possible source of Lessing's *Miss Sara Sampson*, **2**, 177.
- Moore, Frank, *Rebellion Record*, its defects, **5**, 246; its value, 247.
- Moore, Thomas, fondness for similes, **1**, 103; his influence traced on J. G. Percival, **2**, 145; his friendship with Byron, 238; his pilgrimage to Les Charmettes, 238; his life a sham, 240; *also*, **4**, 391 n; on Rousseau, **2**, 238; on French heroic verse, **3**, 161 n.
- MOOSEHEAD JOURNAL, 1853, **1**, 1-42.
- Moosehead Lake, trip up the lake on a steamer, **1**, 13; paddling to the Northwest Carry, 24; across the Carry, 28; passage into the west branch of the Penobscot, 33.
- Moose-hunting by night, incidents of, **1**, 34.
- Moral and æsthetic defects, their connection, **2**, 91.
- Moral dilettante, **2**, 253.
- Moral forces in war, **2**, 100.
- Moral laws, **5**, 223.
- Moral poetry, French success in, **4**, 20.
- Moral supremacy, **4**, 120.
- Morals and science, the advance in, compared, **4**, 254.
- Moralist distinguished from the Artist, **4**, 165.
- Morality and æsthetics, **2**, 242.
- More, Henry, on witchcraft, **2**, 11, 338, 377; on the stench left by the Devil, 347; on Spenser, **4**, 314.
- Moretum*. See Virgil.
- Mormonism, its claim to antiquity of no influence, **5**, 13.
- Morning, at sea and on shore compared, **1**, 106; in the Roman streets, 152.
- Morra*, the game, **1**, 152.
- Morris, Gen., passage cited, **3**, 54.
- Morris, Richard, on Chaucer's verse, **3**, 338.
- Morse, Royall, the Cambridge constable, **1**, 65.
- Morton, Eliza Susan, wife of Pres. Quincy, **2**, 299.
- Mosquitoes in the woods, **1**, 27.
- Mother Goose, versification of, **3**, 338.
- Mothers of great men, **4**, 362.
- Motley, J. L., on the Dutch, **3**, 233.
- Mountain names, **1**, 13.
- Mountain towns of Italy, **1**, 172.
- Mountains, are geological noses, **1**, 13; appreciation of their sublimity, 41; the sun as seen from the top of, 105; the bloom on, 114, 130; between Genezzano and Olevano, 171; the fondness for, **3**, 257; *also*, **4**, 117.
- Mouskes, Philippe, his verse, **3**, 347.
- Mozart, **2**, 187; on Gellert, 139.
- Mud-wagon, ride in, **1**, 10.
- Muggleton, **3**, 62.
- Muggletonians, **1**, 81.
- Munroe, Mayor, of New Orleans, **2**, 61.
- Murfreesboro, battle of, **5**, 109.
- Muse, the, a companion, not a guide, **2**, 108.
- Muses have no fancy for statistics, **2**, 276.
- Music, a knowledge of, important to a poet, **4**, 4.
- Musquash, **3**, 199.
- Musset, Alfred de, a passage compared with Dryden, **3**, 167 n.
- Muster, in Old Cambridge, **1**, 77.
- Mutual admiration, **2**, 219.
- Mutual admiration society described by Goldsmith, **2**, 201.
- Mylius, Lessing's tutor, **2**, 182.
- Mylner of Abington, Hazlitt on, **1**, 320.
- Mysterious, the, its disappearance from the world, **1**, 112.
- Myths, origin and transformations of, **2**, 359.
- Mythology, tendency of the mind to assign improbable causes to unaccountable gifts, **1**, 32; the imagination the chief agent in the growth of, **2**, 318.
- Nakedness of mind frequently unheeded, **1**, 45.
- Names, mountain names, **1**, 13; lines on names of places, 14; value of, 227;

- the associations connected with, **2**, 273; Milton's use of, **4**, 105; the limitations of, **6**, 193.
- Nannucci, *Intorno alle voci usate da Dante*, **4**, 169 n.
- Napier, **1**, 31.
- Naples. *See also*, Neapolitans.
- Napoleon I., his portrait in the Cambridge barber's shop, **1**, 62; compared with Frederick the Great, **2**, 114; fails to recognize Bolivar, 283; recipe for saving life in dealing with a mob, **5**, 84; at St. Helena, 97; the moralist's view of, 129; on the French Revolution, **6**, 33; *also*, **2**, 237; **5**, 23.
- Napoleon III., **5**, 23, 129; unappreciated before the *coup d'état* of 1851, 125.
- Narrative, who can write it well, **1**, 121; wearisome to Carlyle, **2**, 102.
- Narrative poetry, **3**, 351; faults of, **4**, 321. *See also*, Descriptive poetry.
- Narrow range of many great men, **1**, 365.
- Nash on Harvey's hexameters, **4**, 278 n.
- Nations, their manhood tried by dangers and opportunities, **5**, 63; their readiness to accept a hero, 93; symbolized as women, 94; the sins of, 128.
- National character, the effect on, of postponing moral to material interests, **5**, 88.
- National instinct in the Prussian people, **2**, 100.
- National pride of the Old World and the New **2**, 1.
- National success, the true measure of, **6**, 174.
- Nationality, in poetry, **2**, 150; in literature, tending to disappear, 152; its germ in provincialism, 279; hampered in America, 280; as a quality in literature, **4**, 270; **6**, 115; the feeling lacking in America before the Civil War, **5**, 211; its effect on the life of man, 216.
- Natural, the meaning of the word varies from one generation to another, **2**, 373.
- Naturalness, **1**, 375; in literature, **2**, 83; **3**, 357. *See also*, Unconventionality.
- Nature, Moore's view of, **1**, 103; modern sentimentalism about, 375; man's connection with, its most interesting aspect, 376; in Thoreau's writings, 381; her indifference to man, **2**, 131; as viewed by Rousseau and the sentimentalists, 266; the early view of, 319; the free shows provided by, **3**, 257; Chaucer's love of, 355; the love of, a modern thing, 260; ignored by French criticism, **4**, 9; its double meanings, 258; Wordsworth on the infinite variety of, 368; its effect on the imaginative and the solitary, **6**, 104; descriptions of, as employed by the great poets, 111. *See also*, Landscape; Scenery; Views.
- Nature of things, the difficulty of discovering and of accommodating our lives to, **6**, 120.
- Nature-cure of Wordsworth and others, **4**, 411.
- Navagero, Bernardo, on the classes in Austria in 1546, **6**, 14.
- Neapolitans, their laziness, **1**, 131.
- Neatness, a characteristic of Washington Allston, **1**, 72; the faculty of, bestowed by destiny on some men, 73.
- Nebuchadnezzar cited as an instance of men turned into beasts, **2**, 360.
- Neglect not an evidence of genius, **2**, 147.
- Negro plots in New York in 1741, **2**, 375.
- Negro suffrage, advocated, **5**, 228; insisted upon as essential, 261; demanded by the Radical party, 303; not to be expected from the South itself, 311. *See also*, Reconstruction.
- Negroes, effect of slavery upon, **5**, 224; prejudice against, less strong at the South, 231. *See also*, Colored soldiers; Freedmen; Slavery.
- Nelson, his conception of his country, **6**, 104.
- Neptune in a *tête-à-tête*, rather monotonous, **1**, 101.
- Neptune, Planet, discovery of, **5**, 120.
- Nero, Leopoldo's historical scapegoat, **1**, 142.
- Netherlands, Dante's system compared to the Constitution of, **4**, 152.
- NEW ENGLAND TWO CENTURIES AGO, **2**, 1-76; the record of its history in the life of to-day, **1**; faith in God, in man, and in work, the spirit of its founders, **2**; its history dry and unpicturesque seen from without, **2**; the central idea and intention of its founders, **3**; reaction of their principles upon England, **4**; the humorous side of its history brought out by Irving, and the poetic by Cooper, **5**; the charge of fanaticism unfounded, **6**, 9; the founders builders from the beginning, not destroyers, **8**; enthusiasts but not fanatics, **9**; the settlement of New England a business venture, **9**; dealings with sectaries, **10**; the witchcraft delusion, **10**; decline of Puritanism, **12**; New England the outgrowth of English Puritanism, **13**; the early establishment of common schools, **15**; its far-reaching importance, **17**; the

- "Winthrop Papers," 21; Cromwell's opinion of, 33; the temperance question, 41; difficulties of domestic service, 42; interest in alchemy, 46, 51; Edward Howes, 46; Jonathan Brewster, 51; Sir Kenelm Digby, 56; Captain Underhill, 57; Coddington, 63; the Quakers, 66; the Indians, 68; John Tinker, 70; the decline of Puritan vigor, 72; increase of provincialism after 1660, 73; the interest of New England history gregarious rather than personal, 74; the growth of democracy, 74; its small place in the world's history, 272; the eremitic instinct in, 1, 89; of fifty years ago, 4, 374; the so-called radicalism of, 5, 275; the first settlers a practical though sometimes an impracticable people, 6, 82; early musket-ball currency, 82; Robinson and Brewster on the mutual obligations of the early colonists, 97; Stoughton on the choice material of its planting, 146; made a good market for books by the presence of the College, 150; influence of Harvard College upon, 153; a college education prized in old times, 169; its leading industries being drawn to the South, 217. *See also*, America; American; Massachusetts; Puritans; Yankee.
- New England church-architecture, 1, 54.
- New England clergy, formerly an establishment and an aristocracy, 1, 85; their character and influence, 6, 144; the clergy of the 17th and 18th centuries, 154; their descendants, 156.
- New England life, some sentiment of the sea essential to it, 1, 69; fostered the belief in witchcraft, 2, 376; its intellectual independence secured by the founding of Harvard College, 6, 143; its character in 18th cent., 155.
- New England pronunciation, 2, 70.
- New England school-house described, 2, 16.
- Newfoundland, a British parson's prophecy for, 3, 243.
- Newman, the white-and-yellow-washer in Cambridge, 1, 59.
- Newman, Cardinal, on Homeric metre, 1, 291.
- Newness, unsatisfying, 1, 5.
- New Orleans, 5, 319.
- Newspaper boy, his mercantile interest in horrors, 1, 5.
- Newspaper correspondents, Noah the patron saint of, 1, 102.
- Newspaper speculations on politics, 3, 197.
- Newspapers, American, 2, 154; the public demand for fresh gossip, 5, 240; value of their contemporary picture of life, 241; make the whole nation a great town meeting, 244; give publicity to grievances, 6, 13; their unimportant and belittling gossip, 88; their power, 175; their references to bribery and political machinery, 200. *See also*, Journalism.
- Newton, Sir Isaac, 4, 155; 5, 13.
- New World epic, its protagonist, 2, 5.
- New York, its wrangle with Boston, 2, 278; the imagined negro plots in 1741, 375.
- Niagara Falls, the first sight of, compared to the first sight of St. Peter's, 1, 192.
- Nibelungen Lied*, 2, 152, 359; Frederick the Great's contempt for, 112; published by Bodmer in 1757, 4, 6; its character, 228, 229.
- Nicallson, Joseph, 2, 64.
- Nicknames, 1, 58.
- Nicolai, Chr. Fr., 2, 197.
- Nightingale. *See under* Birds.
- Nightmare, 2, 321.
- Nimroud, palaces of, 1, 70.
- Noah, remarks on his life at sea, 1, 102.
- Noble, Mark, *History of the House of Cromwell*, 4, 388 n.
- Noon in St. Peter's, Rome, 1, 200.
- Norman crusaders, 3, 248.
- Norman trouvères. *See* Trouvères.
- Norman-French literature, contempt for emancipated serfs expressed in, 5, 304.
- Normans, their influence on the development of epic poetry in France and England, 3, 313; influence on English character and literature, 320.
- North, The. *See* United States—*North*.
- North Carolina, life of the older families of, 5, 309.
- Northcote, his story of the violin-player and George III., 1, 219.
- Northmen, 3, 320.
- Northwest Carry on Moosehead Lake, 1, 28.
- Nose, talking through, 3, 237, 242.
- Nostradamus, 5, 125.
- Notoriety, 4, 120; in America, 2, 277.
- Notoriety and fame, 272.
- Nott, 5, 220.
- Novalis, 1, 381; 2, 325.
- Novels. *See* Fiction.
- Novelty, danger of substituting it for truth, 2, 108.
- Nursing children, 2, 244.
- Nymphidia*. *See* Drayton.
- Oak, Wordsworth's life compared to, 4, 394.

- Oath, manner of taking, **1**, 346.
 Oaths. *See* Imprecations; Swearing.
 Obituary of Lady Gosling, **2**, 219.
 Oblivion, the next best thing to fame or infamy, **1**, 315.
 Obscure authors, the reparation time brings them, **1**, 314; the pathos of, 316.
 Observation, honest, difficulty of securing, **1**, 121.
 Obtuseness of men to their own follies, verses on, **1**, 81.
 Occasion. *See* Opportunity.
 Occleve, **3**, 329; his portrait of Chaucer, 294.
 Ocean. *See* Sea.
 Odium æstheticum, **4**, 354.
 Edipus, the feeling of Laius toward, **3**, 233.
 Offer, George, editor of *Mather's Providences*, his poor English, **1**, 256; his inaccuracies, 257, 260.
 Ogier le Danois, **3**, 314.
 Oglethorpe, **2**, 291.
 Okey, Colonel, **2**, 24.
 Old age, **3**, 258; of Josiah Quincy, **2**, 308; Langland's lines on, **3**, 333; Dante on, **4**, 181; absence of decided opinions in, **6**, 7.
 OLD AUTHORS, LIBRARY OF, **1**, 247-348.
 Old books, **1**, 247; the associations clustering about them, 250.
 Old ways, love of, **3**, 220.
 Oldest surviving graduate, his advantages, **1**, 82.
 Oldham, Dryden and Hallam on, **3**, 177.
 Olevano, visit to, **1**, 173; the view, 174.
 Olive-trees near Tivoli, **1**, 139.
 Oliver and Fierabras, **3**, 310.
 Olympic games of the nations, **2**, 279.
 Omar, Caliph, his example in burning libraries to be followed by politicians, **6**, 190.
 Oneida, **3**, 212.
 Onions, **1**, 60.
 Opera, as an approach to ancient drama, **2**, 132.
 Opinion, the kinship of, **6**, 182.
 Opinion, public. *See* Public opinion.
 Opinion and affection, Selden on, **2**, 199.
 Opinions, **6**, 160; other people's, **3**, 230.
 Opium, Coleridge's use of, **6**, 76.
 Opportunity, **1**, 374; **2**, 277; **4**, 391 n; the imperturbable old clock of, **1**, 71; in the lives of men and of nations, **5**, 270.
 Opportunity and danger, 63.
 Oppression, **1**, 205; its moral effect on the oppressor, 222.
 Optimism of Cervantes, **6**, 118.
 Orange, Prince of, his camp, **2**, 57.
 Oratorio as the representative of ancient drama, **2**, 132.
 Oratory, Emerson's power, **1**, 359; popular oratory in the United States, **5**, 265.
 Orestes, his case brought before the Areopagus, **2**, 363 n.
 Orford, Earl of, listened to Statius when drunk, **2**, 129.
 Organ-music, **1**, 101.
 Origin of man, its diversity proved by the Roman beggars, **1**, 207.
 Original sin and the Emperor, **2**, 22.
 Originality, **1**, 206; **2**, 135; **3**, 90, 142; stirred by Emerson's lectures, **1**, 355; absolute originality impossible, 372; its essential quality, 241, 373; **2**, 175; **3**, 299, 301; gets rid of selfhood, **2**, 259; healthiness necessary to, **3**, 292; the measure of, **4**, 299; distinguished from eccentricity, 356; must not be sought, 395; the result of imagination, **6**, 53; by itself does not assure permanence, 108. *See also*, Imitation.
 of Washington Allston, **1**, 76; Thoreau's attempts at, 371; of Rousseau, **2**, 246; of Chaucer, **3**, 360; of Dante, **4**, 257.
 Orléans, Bishop of, exposes a pretended case of possession, **2**, 393.
 Orléans, Ch. d', on winter, **3**, 265 n.
 Orr, Governor, **5**, 286.
 Orrery on mistakes in speaking and writing English, **3**, 130 n.
 Orthodoxy, Lessing on, **2**, 215.
 Ossian, Thoreau on, **1**, 369.
 Ostend Manifesto, **5**, 145.
 Ostrich, Dryden's style compared to, **3**, 115.
Ottimo Comento, on Dante's horoscope, **4**, 123; on Dante's separation from the other Ghibellines, 132; on Dante's use of words, 139; quoted, 246.
 Out-of-the-way, loved by Thoreau, **1**, 372.
 Overbury, Sir Thomas, his *Characters* reprinted in the "Library of Old Authors," **1**, 252; on his milkmaid, **3**, 292.
 Ovid, his failure to compose a treatise on the language of the Getæ, **1**, 121; gives hints of sentimentalism, **2**, 253; Dryden on, **3**, 180; influence on mediæval literature, 301; Spenser in Ireland compared to Ovid in Pontus, **4**, 286; *also* **3**, 218, 263.
 Owls. *See under* Birds.
 Oxford, Dante's possible visit to, **4**, 124; elections at, **5**, 232.
 Oxford University, Dryden on, **3**, 106; the spell of its venerable associations, **6**, 139.
 Oyster, the traveller beset by *ciceroni* compared to, **1**, 134.

- Oyster-men in Cambridge, the twin-brothers Snow, **1**, 66.
 Ozanam, on Dante, **4**, 164, 222 n.
- P. = Prof. Popkin.
- Paddling on Moosehead Lake, **1**, 24.
- Pagan divinities, their survival in the superstitions of Christianity, **2**, 327.
- Paganism divides from one's sympathies more than time, **1**, 213.
- Paine, Thomas, **2**, 237.
- Painting, Allston the greatest English painter of historical subjects, **1**, 75; pyramidal theory of composition, **3**, 90. *See also*, Picture galleries.
- Palestrina, visit to, **1**, 157; the locandiera's praises of her daughter, 188.
- Palfrey, estimate of Hugh Peter, **2**, 29.
- Palm Sunday in St. Peter's, **1**, 196.
- Palmerston, **2**, 276.
- Pan, **4**, 403; identified with the Devil by Bodin, **2**, 347.
- Panaceas, social, **2**, 91.
- Panic, cruelty the result of, **2**, 375.
- Pantheism, **6**, 104; in Pope's *Essay on Man*, **4**, 37, 41.
- Panurge, **2**, 28.
- Papacy, lies dead in the Vatican, **1**, 155; Dante on its relations to the Empire, **4**, 239. *See also*, Roman Catholicism.
- Paracelsus, **2**, 129.
- Paradise of Dainty Devices*, **3**, 337.
- Parallelisms in history, **5**, 126.
- Paralogistic reasoning, **5**, 127.
- Paris, Dante's possible visit to, **4**, 124.
- Paris and Helen, **1**, 68.
- Paris, Gaston, **6**, 152.
- Parise la Duchesse, **3**, 310.
- Parker, Theodore, on the conception of democracy, **6**, 20.
- Parkman, Francis, opinion of the Indians, **2**, 70.
- Parliament, **6**, 27.
- Parnassus, its two peaks, **4**, 378.
- Parody, what is susceptible of, **3**, 41.
- Parris, minister at Salem, his character, **2**, 389.
- Parrot, duty demanded for, and consequent quarrel, **1**, 168.
- Parsons, T. W., translation of the *Inferno*, **4**, 147.
- Participles in -ed, **4**, 92.
- Particularization, **3**, 357; Wordsworth's power of, **4**, 401.
- Party allegiance, **6**, 184.
- Party government, in America, **5**, 184; its evils, **6**, 182; the necessity and the danger of, 210; the necessity for politicians and leaders, 212; the need of a neutral body of independents, 212. *See also*, Political parties.
- Party managers, **5**, 285.
- Party platforms, **6**, 182; the strength of, **5**, 37.
- Parzival*. *See* Wolfram von Eschenbach, **4**, 231.
- Pascal, Coleridge on, **6**, 75.
- Passages, **2**, 82.
- Passawumpscoot, visit at, **1**, 185.
- Passion, as portrayed by the great masters, **2**, 123; in French literature, **4**, 20; passion and exaggeration, 16.
- Passions, their freshness and force in Europeans, **1**, 169; more important to greatness than intellect, 170; the expression of, in literature, **3**, 39, 52.
- Past, the, **1**, 355; its consecration, **2**, 273; its life and customs, 293; memories of, 305; regret for the Good Old Times, 395; its power, **4**, 80; its cumulative influence, 120; looking back upon, compared to looking over the waves, 126; reverence for, **5**, 12; its result seen in the present, **6**, 124; still carried on our crupper, 137. *See also*, Antiquity; History.
- Pastoral poetry, **3**, 64; **4**, 284; in Spenser's time, 300; the language appropriate for, 301 n.
- Pastourelles, **3**, 361.
- Patchwork coverlet, the work of the Chicago Convention of 1864 compared to, **5**, 156.
- Pateridge, Sir Miles, **5**, 128.
- Pathos in dramatic and narrative poetry, **3**, 351.
- of Lessing's grief, **2**, 210; of Fielding, **6**, 55; of Heine, 56; in *Don Quixote*, 120.
- Patience, **2**, 81.
- Patricianism, **2**, 4.
- Patrick, Capt. Daniel, **2**, 57.
- Patriotism, Roger Williams on the quality of, **2**, 73; in Germany during the 17th cent., 203; increased and extended by means of the telegraph, **5**, 243; needed equally in peace as in war, **6**, 189; its true meaning and value, 219; *also*, **5**, 177. *See also*, Love of country.
- Patronage, the geographical allotment of, **6**, 214.
- Paul, St., Dante's references to, **4**, 203 n.
- Paul and Virginia*. *See* Bernardin de St. Pierre.
- Peace, felt at twilight, **3**, 220; Dante on, **4**, 242; not to be purchased by the sacrifice of principle and pluck, **5**, 9; not the housemate of cowardice, 74.
- Pearson, Eliphalet, Principal of Phillips Acad., **2**, 298.
- Peasants. *See* Austrian peasants; Italian peasants.
- Pebbles on the beach, the lesson drawn from them, **1**, 21.

- Peculiarities of character less hidden in old times, **1**, 95.
- Pedagogue, St., **1**, 79.
- Pedantry, of German 18th cent. literature, **2**, 220; Montaigne began the crusade against, 221; holds sacred the dead shells, 359; the dangers of, **6**, 152.
- Peel, Sir Robert, gives Wordsworth a pension, **4**, 393.
- Pegasus, **1**, 220; supposed advertisement for, 196.
- Pelli as a critic of Dante, **4**, 164.
- Pendleton, democratic candidate for Vice-President in 1864, **5**, 154.
- Penitence, Dryden's lines on, **3**, 167.
- Penn, William, **3**, 218.
- Penobscot River, the west branch, **1**, 33.
- Pentameters, rhymed, compared to thin ice, **3**, 136 n.
- Pepperell, Sir William, **2**, 274.
- Pepys, the only sincere diarist in English, **1**, 121; his perfect frankness and unconsciousness, **2**, 261; the value of his memoirs, 285; his *Diary*, **3**, 134 n; *also*, **1**, 250; **2**, 79.
- on Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis*, **3**, 134; on the *Maiden Queen*, 135 n; on the *Wild Gallant*, 147; on *Evening Love*, 148; on the *Indian Emperor*, acted at Court, 175 n.
- PERCIVAL, JAMES GATES, LIFE AND LETTERS OF, **2**, 140-161; character of his poetry, 141; comparisons, 141, 142; his failure to learn that the world did not want his poetry, 142; compared with Akenside, 143; a professor of poetry rather than a poet, 143; his faculty artificial, not innate, 144; the literary influences to which he was subjected, 144; his unappeasable dulness, 146; his lack of systematic training, 146; his complaints of neglected genius, 147, 159; the times propitious to mediocrity, 148; hailed by the critics as the great American poet, 154; found tedious by the public, 155; an example of the too numerous class of feeble poets, 158; his miscellaneous equipment for work, 159; his opportunities and failures, 160; his attempt at suicide, 160; as a geologist and linguist, 161.
- his *Imprecation*, **2**, 144; *Mind*, 143; *Prometheus*, 141.
- Perham, **2**, 282.
- Periodical publication, the fashion encourages sensationalism, **2**, 82.
- Periphrases, **1**, 295; **4**, 10.
- Perkins, Mr., the painful, **2**, 13.
- Persecution, Puritan attitude toward, **6**, 145.
- Persigny, **2**, 276.
- Personality becoming of less account, **5**, 131.
- Personification, **3**, 354; **4**, 324; alphabetic, **3**, 96; the natural instinct for, **6**, 104.
- Peru, **2**, 273.
- Peter, St., his miracles in Rome, **1**, 154; Southwell's version of his "Complaint," 253.
- Peter of Abano, one of the earliest unbelievers in witchcraft, **2**, 381.
- Peter, Hugh, life and execution, **2**, 24; his character, 25; his relations to Mrs. Sheffield, 25; Endicott's comment on, 27; his coquetting with Mrs. Ruth, 27; later notices of, 28; letter desiring an Indian servant, 43.
- Petrarch, a sentimentalist, **1**, 100, 376; **2**, 253; his understanding with Death, 254; his moral inconsistency, 255; his sonnets compared with Michel Angelo's, 256; his influence on modern literature, 256; his genuine qualities, 256; probability of Chaucer's meeting with, **3**, 294; his exquisite artifice, 303; Byron on his excellence in execution, **4**, 42; *also*, **2**, 105, 155; **3**, 260; **4**, 160.
- Africa*, **2**, 129; *Laura*, **4**, 349.
- Pettigrew, Colonel, **5**, 59.
- Peucerus, Gaspar, on lycanthropy, **2**, 362.
- Pheidias, **3**, 38 n.
- Phi Beta Kappa Society, Emerson's oration before, **1**, 366.
- Philadelphia convention of 1866, compared to the Irishman's kettle of soup, **5**, 283; compared to a circus, 285; its problem to make a patent reconciliation cement from fire and gunpowder, 286; compared to a ship stuck in a mud-bank, 287; the Resolutions and Address, 287; its real principle the power of the President, 288; its constituents, 288; attitude toward reconstruction, 301; the measures advocated, 318.
- Philip, St., cited as a case of corporeal deportation, **2**, 353.
- Philip II., the ambassador's answer to, **2**, 108.
- Philips, Ambrose, description of ice-coated trees, **3**, 280; his love for nature, 280.
- Philisterei, the revolt against, **1**, 363.
- Phillistines, **3**, 189.
- Phillips, Edward, his *Theatrum Poetarum* reflects Milton's judgments, **4**, 1; on true poetry, **2**; on the use of rhyme, 22.
- Phillips, Wendell, of kin to Josiah Quincy, **2**, 297.
- Phillips Andover Academy, J. Quincy at, **2**, 297.
- Philosophical poetry, **6**, 112.

- Philosophy, Dante on, **4**, 183, 200; symbolized by Beatrice in the *Vita Nuova*, 204.
- Phineus, **4**, 115.
- Phoenix, **2**, 47.
- Phoebos, **2**, 137.
- Phosphorescence, at sea, **1**, 103; **4**, 83; verses on, **1**, 103; a dirty scum in the daytime, 104.
- Physical geography as the tenth Muse, **2**, 153.
- Pickens, Gov., **5**, 74.
- PICKENS-AND-STEALIN'S REBELLION, **5**, 75-91.
- Pickering, Sir Gilbert, **3**, 106.
- Picture galleries, difficulties of un-instructed visitors, **1**, 212.
- Picturesque, the, its money value in a town, **1**, 55; often due to the quarrels of the Middle Ages, 172; Carlyle's love of, **2**, 92; the search for, **3**, 260; in historical composition, **4**, 64; **5**, 122; St. Simon a master of, **4**, 65; the hints given to the imagination, 73; in the civilization of a people, **5**, 309.
- Pie-plants* (rhubarb) of Newman the white-washer in Cambridge, **1**, 59.
- Pierce, Franklin, letter on free elections, **5**, 156.
- Piers Ploughman*. See Langland.
- Piety confounded with dulness, **1**, 254.
- Pigsgusset, **1**, 14.
- Pike's Peak, **1**, 14.
- Pilgrim Fathers compared with the Israelites of the Exodus, **2**, 1; their conception of a commonwealth, 75.
- Pilgrim Society dinners, **2**, 3.
- Pincio, illumination of St. Peter's seen from, **1**, 202.
- Pinckney, William, on slavery, **5**, 141.
- Pinckney, Fort, **5**, 59.
- Pine-tree on the old New England money and flag, **1**, 69.
- Pine-trees seen against the twilight sky, **1**, 34.
- Pinto. See Mendez Pinto.
- Pirates, their cruelty not to be wondered at, **1**, 101.
- Pisa, **1**, 191.
- Pisani, **4**, 119.
- Pitt, **2**, 302.
- Plagiarism, **3**, 143; in literature, 299; of the poets, 269.
- Plainness of diction, **1**, 241; in the transcendental movement, 362.
- Plancus, Consul, **2**, 305.
- Plato, Dante's acquaintance with, **4**, 155; Dante on, 203 n; compared with Aristotle, 254; also, **6**, 8, 165.
- Pleasantness, **6**, 49.
- Pliny, story of a haunted house, **2**, 323; letter on the eruption of Vesuvius, **5**, 241.
- Plotinus, his commonwealth of philosophers, **1**, 350.
- Pluck, Carlyle's idolatry of, **2**, 110.
- Plurals, **4**, 91.
- Plutarch, **2**, 284; **3**, 231; **6**, 91; on allegory, **3**, 362.
- Poem, compared to a painted window, **3**, 67; compared to the apples of the Hesperides, **4**, 266.
- Poet, makes people see what everybody can look at, **1**, 4; fills language again with the life which it has lost, 194; the power of his intellect over his feeling, 231; represents the youth of each new generation, 244; not exempt from the logic of life and circumstance, **2**, 157; Victor Hugo's idea of his function, 157; his language, **3**, 7; his re-discoveries of the world, 64; Dryden on the product of his later years, 112; compared to a silkworm, 300; his function to make the familiar novel, 335; his creations contain more than he puts into them, 90; the structural faculty necessary to, 324; must keep alive traditions of the pure, the holy, and the beautiful, **4**, 48; question whether Pope be a great poet, 57; two standards for the judgment of, 298; his office to be a Voice, 357; his function, 413; his view of history, **5**, 123.
- Poets, modern poets, **2**, 82; their characteristics to be recognized in their earliest works, 84; new poets, 120, 121; improve after forty, according to Dryden, **3**, 127; character of their debt to their predecessors, 299; those who are good only for spurts, 356; collections of, **4**, 273; futility of critical essays upon, **6**, 99.
- Poets, great, Schiller on, **2**, 111; extremely rare, **3**, 1; all in a sense provincial, **4**, 235; the happiness of, 297; their office, 355; Wordsworth on the province of, 379; the exquisite sensibility of, 413; their infinite variety of topic, **6**, 8.
- Poetic expression, **1**, 245; **3**, 9.
- Poetic form, **2**, 136.
- Poetic language, **3**, 9; its balance of proportions, 15.
- Poetical justice, **5**, 127.
- Poetry, the "spasmodic" school, **1**, 280; good poetry more fiercely resented than bad morals, 225; Carlyle's contempt for, **2**, 90; its proper object ideal, 99; conditions necessary for, 120; the physically intense school, 122; maidenly reserve of its higher forms, 123; what is demanded in, in a verse-writing generation, 140; life its only subject, 150; a rooted discontent underlies

- it, 150; influence of democracy upon, 151; introspection and feebleness of modern poetry, 158; not to be pursued as a profession, 193; character of profound poetry, 252; the action of the imagination in, 318; the quality of vividness of expression in, 3, 31; great poets and secondary intellects distinguished, 37; schools of poetry, 38; the office of language in, 46; the supreme function of, 171 n; the question of plagiarism in, 299; Romanic tendency to the scientific treatment of, 308; does not spring from the Anglo-Saxon nature, 318; not made from the understanding, 319; the good fortune of early poets, 335; artifice unsatisfactory, 4, 8; its decline under French influence, 21; unconventionality essential, 22; influence of character in, 261; its true vitality, 267; the quality of nationality in, 270; description in, 272; its first duty to be delightful, 273; the conception of, in England, in 16th century, 299; importance of diction in, 308; the sensuous and the sensual in, 317; value of abundance in, 328; the question of matter and form, 357; the difference between Fact and Truth, 384; instructs not by precept, but by suggestion, 6, 110; *also*, 3, 128. *See also*, American, Anglo-Norman, Anglo-Saxon, English, French, German, Provençal, Romance, Scotch, Teutonic poetry; — *also*, Ballad poetry; Descriptive poetry; Dramatic poetry; Epic poetry; Moral poetry; Narrative poetry; Pastoral poetry; Philosophical poetry; Religious poetry; Romanic poetry; Sacred poetry; Sonnet; Troubadours; Trouvères.
- Emerson's criticism of, 1, 354; Bacon's definition of, 2, 156; Lessing on the cultivation of, 196; Dryden on the end and character of, 3, 155; Faurel on prosaic passages in, 162 n; Edw. Phillips on, 4, 2; Voltaire makes Difficulty a tenth Muse, 8; Waller on care in writing, 14; Spenser's conception of, 306; Wordsworth's theories of, 382, 398, 406; Sir John Harrington on, 409.
- Poetry and prose, 18th century ideas of their relation, 1, 246; the distinction between them, 2, 196, 226; 4, 330; danger of mixing them, 3, 144; Coleridge's distinction, 4, 384.
- Poggetto, Cardinal, 4, 141.
- Police in Rome, 1, 216.
- Polish, Waller on, 4, 14.
- Political dogmas, their tendency to become dead formulas, 5, 36.
- Political economy, humanity its most important element, 6, 35; value of the study, 92; study of, 177.
- Political eloquence, American, 5, 49, 51.
- Political evils, the cure of, 3, 236.
- Political machinery, 6, 183.
- Political meetings, 6, 182.
- Political office, the qualifications for, 3, 235.
- Political parties, 6, 29; blind to vicious methods employed for their advantage, 200. *See also*, Party government.
- Political speculations, possible value of, 3, 198.
- Political thinker, Burke and Milton, 4, 81; effect of abstract ideas on, 85.
- Political wisdom of Burke, 2, 234.
- Politicians, Steele on, 3, 284. Politicians and statesmen, 4, 179; not leaders but followers of public sentiment, 5, 75; the study of political economy recommended to, 6, 183; object to the scholar in politics, 190; call learned men pedants and doctrinaires, 193; required by the system of party government, 212; engaged with the local eddies of prejudice, 220. *See also*, Statesmen.
- Politics, subordinate to poetry, 4, 373; its deepest lesson taught by a common danger, 5, 46; difficulty of forecasting events, 125; men taking the place of principles, 132; the qualities necessary for success in state-craft, 183; a rigid doctrinaire an unsafe politician, 189; success obtained by skill in taking advantage of circumstances, 189; a science demanding serious application, 193; trifling considerations to be taken into account, 196; loyalty to great ends, not obstinacy in prejudice demanded, 196; importance of public opinion, 199; 6, 34; cause and effect proportionate, 5, 204; the sense of personal wrong as an interpreter of abstract principles, 205; equality not conferred by man, 237; the danger of accepting an easy expedient at the sacrifice of a difficult justice, 238; a disproportionate value set upon consistency, 266; national opinions move slowly, 271; the secret of permanent leadership to know how to be moderate, 271; homogeneity of laws and institutions necessary to strength, 281; the idea of government precedes that of liberty, 282; party managers, 285; parties as the ladders of ambitious men, 293; politicians and statesmen, 294; advantages of a bold

- policy, 315; the great current of a nation's life, 318; the nobleness of the science, 318; no trick of perpetual motion in, 6, 20; French fallacy in regard to new governments, 22; the effect of party organization, 29; the power of sentiment in, 39; the harmful side of good nature in, 97; the growing aversion to, 176; the practice of nominating men without a "record," 184; acts of official courage rare, but sometimes contagious, 185; a moderated and controlled enthusiasm the most potent of motive forces, 189.
- POLITICS, THE PLACE OF THE INDEPENDENT IN:** address, April 13, 1888, 6, 190-221; the scholar in politics sneered at, 190; Bacon on the practical politician and the empiric physician, 192; defined as the art of national housekeeping, 195; become statesmanship when they reach a higher level, 196; the tricks of management superseding the science of government, 198; the importance of mere manhood developed in the American Colonies, 205; the production of great men the chief duty of a nation, 209; the place of politics in a nation's life, 219. *See also*, Autocracy; Cities; Civil service; Class legislation; Communism; Compromise; Conservatism; Democracy; Diplomacy; Discussion; Equality; Freedom; Government; Independent; Statesmanship.
- Polk, James K., 3, 257.
- Pollard, Edw. A., *Southern History of the War* contrasted with Greeley's *American Conflict*, 5, 132; its style, 133; its picture of the Yankees, 133; on the causes of the war, 134; his democratic principles, 134; quoted, 252.
- Pollen, 1, 366.
- Polo, Marco, 1, 111; 4, 105.
- Polybius, 3, 105; Dryden's judgment of, 113 n.
- Pomegranate-seeds of the Arabian story compared to the points of an opponent's argument, 1, 51.
- Pomeroy, General, 6, 70.
- Pompeii, the Greek artistic nature displayed at, 1, 48.
- Pope, Roman, his relations to the people, 1, 200; the mockery of his Easter benediction, 204; the feeling of the Italians toward him, 205; Dante on his supremacy, 4, 153; his election not free from passion and intrigue, 5, 232.
- POPE, ALEXANDER, 4, 1-57; his widespread fame at the time of his death, 5; the general discontent with his school, 6; its analogy with the *cult-ist* school of the 16th cent., 9; it degenerates into a mob of mannerists, 27; his poetry gives a faithful picture of the society of his day, 10; circumstances which prepared the way for its popularity, 11; French influence on English literature, 11, 16, 20; Pope the poet of conventional life, 25; the author's early dislike for him, 26; what he represents in literature, 26; Wordsworth's relation to him, 27; Pope's one perfect work marks his genius, 27; his earliest productions marked by sense and discretion and facility of expression, 28; their affectation of sentiment, 28; his terseness and discretion, 31; Pope the true poet of society, 31; the *Rape of the Lock* analyzed, 31; the *Essay on Man*, 36; his accuracy, of expression rather than of thought, 37, 56; his confused logic, 39; his precision of thought no match for the fluency of his verse, 42; his execution over-praised, 42; instances of confused or unsuitable imagery, 43; tempted by epigram or rhyme to false statement, 44; his *Moral Essays* and *Satires*, 44; his accuracy in personal description, 46; his ideals of women, 46; had a sense of the neat rather than of the beautiful, 48; the *Dunciad*, 48; his fancy that of a wit rather than of a poet, 49; his personal character, 49; the discomforting consciousness of the public shown by his letters, 50; his relations to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 51; his meanness displayed in his correspondence with Aaron Hill, 52; his relations to Addison, 52; his letter to Lord Burlington excellent, 53; the controversy over his poetry, 53; his more ambitious works defined as careless thinking carefully versified, 56; his verse lacking in song, 56; to be ranked with Voltaire, 57; reasons for considering him a great poet, 57; compared with Dryden, 3, 114, 177, 184, 190; 4, 57; a *parvenu*, 3, 179; his notion of gentility, 188 n; his verse not uniform in elisions, 347; *also*, 181, 360; 4, 414.
- on Dryden, 3, 173, 188; on Addison, 4, 45; on Milton, 116; on Spenser, 351.
- Voltaire on, 4, 6; Johnson on, 49, 54; Warton on, 53; Bowles on, 54; Campbell on, 54; Lessing on, 56.
- Correspondence*, its affected indifference to the world, 4, 28; *Dunciad*, 6; filthy and indiscriminating, 48; *Essay on Criticism*, 30; *Essay on Man* acceptable to men of all shades of opinion, 36; its absurdities, 37;

- its doctrines from Hobbes and Spinoza, 37; Bolingbroke its inspiration, 38; Pope aware of its dangerous principles, 38; its confusion of logic, 39; lacks *either* clearness of thought or sincerity, 42; — *Homer*, 2, 297; 3, 275; Broome's part in, 1, 267; Coleridge on, 287; — *Moral Essays*, 4, 44; — *On the Death of Mrs. Tempest*, 29; — *Pastorals*, 3, 361; 4, 28; — *Rape of the Lock*, 56; unmatched for pure entertainment, 27; analyzed, 31; the machinery of the Sylphs, 32, 33; the mock-heroic treatment, 32; its satiric wit, 34; its pleasing harmony, 34; its perfect form, 36; compared with Drayton's *Nymphidia*, 49; — *Satires*, 3, 177; full of wit and epigram, 4, 44; the inevitable antitheses, 45; — *Timon*, Coleridge on, 3, 179 n; — *Windsor Forest*, 4, 29.
- Pope, Gen., 5, 95.
- Popkin, Professor, reminiscences of, 1, 91; 6, 152.
- Populacity, 5, 294.
- Popular imagination, homeliness of, 6, 85.
- Popular prejudice, the element of truth in, 3, 315.
- Popularity, 4, 378; Carlyle on the curse of, 2, 107; of Frederick the Great, 112.
- Popularity, literary, what it implies, 2, 78; the power of entertaining its first element, 79.
- Pork, salt, eaten with a relish in the woods, 1, 26; Uncle Zeb's theory of, 27.
- Porter's flip, 1, 88; Pres. Kirkland tries it, 86.
- Portici, 1, 151.
- Portinari, Beatrice. *See* Dante — *Beatrice*.
- Porto Ferrajo, 1, 167.
- Portuguese men-of-war, 1, 102.
- Posing, the instinct of southern races for, 2, 269.
- Possession, demoniac, the natural tendency toward, 2, 370; contagious in convents and elsewhere, 371.
- Posterity forgets those who think most of it, 1, 122.
- Poussin, Gaspar, 3, 261.
- Poverty a crime in Pope's *Dunciad*, 4, 48.
- Powell, Mary, Masson on her probable appearance, 4, 68.
- Power, character of those who have held it, 1, 170.
- Powers, Hiram, 3, 282.
- Practical men, 4, 313; 6, 193.
- Practicality of Emerson, 1, 350.
- Praise when over-hasty apt to become satire, 5, 174.
- Prayer, Pres. Kirkland's manner, 1, 88.
- Prayer-mill, image of, applied to Carlyle's later writings, 2, 96.
- Precedent, its value, 5, 194.
- Precision of thought and language, 6, 93.
- Preëminence, the satisfaction in, 3, 255.
- Prefaces, Swift on, 3, 134.
- Prejudices, 5, 119; 6, 96.
- Pre-Raphaelite, abuse of the term, 1, 363.
- Pre-Raphaelite art, Anglo-Saxon's lack of appreciation of, 1, 185.
- Prerogative, 2, 4.
- Presbyterian Church recommended the abolition of slavery in 1787, 5, 141.
- Presbyterians in England in 1658, 2, 38.
- Presbyterianism, Scotch, Carlyle the herald of its decease, 1, 364; and the embodiment of its spirit, 365.
- Prescriptions, curious ones sent by Sir K. Digby to J. Winthrop, Jr., 2, 56.
- Presence of mind and presence of speech, 2, 311.
- President, his humble origin of no importance, but his present character, 5, 264; should be the highest type of American, 265; his position in ordinary times different from what it was during the war, 268, 274; must not take sectional ground, 274.
- PRESIDENT, THE, ON THE STUMP, 5, 264-282. *See* Johnson, Andrew.
- Press, unmuzzled in Holland, 3, 234. *See also*, Journalism; Newspapers.
- Préville, anecdote of his counterfeiting drunkenness, 2, 103.
- Priapus, 4, 207 n.
- Pride of birth, 5, 264. *See also*, Ancestry.
- Priests, popular opinion of, in Italy, 1, 143; always to be found in a diligence, 150; bitter feeling of a Roman driver against, 154.
- Priestcraft, 2, 4.
- Priestley, Dr., 2, 295; 6, 19.
- Primrose, Mr., 1, 317.
- Printers' blunders. *See* Misprints.
- Printing, invention of, its effect, 3, 4.
- Prison at Palestrina, like English jails of Queen Elizabeth's time, 1, 159.
- Private judgment, 5, 10; in the opinion of the Puritans, 2, 10.
- Privileges, 6, 29.
- Probables, the casuists' doctrine of, 4, 72.
- Professions, the divisions between, stricter in modern times, 2, 285.
- Progress, its effect on temperaments which love what is permanent, 1, 85; depends on things of the mind, not on railways and telegraphs, 6, 228.

- Proof-reading in Shakespeare's time, 3, 22.
- Proper names, Milton's use of, 4, 105.
- Property, the rights of, not threatened by Democracy, 5, 27; 6, 11; a Father of the Church called it theft, 14; its security in America, 26; its part in bearing the burdens of the state, 26.
- Property in slaves, 5, 28.
- Prophecy, Masson's treatment of, 4, 72; difficulties of, in history and politics, 5, 125.
- Prophets, events careless of the reputations of, 6, 10.
- Prophets, Hebrew, character of their prose, 1, 253; Dante compared to, 4, 160, 176.
- Prophet's breeches, Prof. P.'s *toga* compared to, 1, 93.
- Propriety in diction, 3, 125.
- Prosaic type of mind, its danger, 3, 319.
- Prose and poetry. *See* Poetry and prose.
- Prosody. *See* Alexandrines; Blank verse; Couplets; Elisions; Rhyme; Versification; *also*, English, French, Italian prosody.
- Prospero, 3, 26.
- Protection, 5, 31; applied to the weather, 6, 12; applied to foreign experience, 191; a policy of robbing Peter to pay Paul, 216; the logical extension of the system, 217; its effects, 217; not the cause of our material prosperity, 218; the policy borrowed from the mediæval guilds, 218.
- Protestantism, lacking in materials for the imagination, 1, 195; has blundered in trusting to the intellect alone, 196; no longer protests, 364; De Maistre's charge against, 2, 6; Dryden's opinion of, 3, 179 n, 187.
- Protestantism in politics, 3, 245.
- Proudhon, 6, 14.
- Provence, compared to a morning sky of early summer, 3, 303; absence of national life in, 307.
- Provençal language, became purely literary, and so dead, 3, 307; effect of its Roman derivation on literature, 308.
- Provençal poetry, its interest as a fore-runner, 3, 302; its artificiality, 303, 306, 308; remained a provincial literature, 304; its refined formality the legacy of Gallo-Roman culture, 305; its influence, 308; Dante familiar with, 4, 212 n. *See also*, Troubadours.
- Proverbs, 6, 161.
- Providence, Jerome's belief in its limitation, 1, 41; Carlyle's impatience with the ways of, 2, 93; Carlyle's cudgel theory of, 105; Dryden on, 135; its operation in history, 5, 127.
- Provincialism, contains the germ of nationality, 2, 279; agreeable when it has a flavor of its own, 288; in literature, 3, 304; 6, 115; *also*, 3, 240; 4, 12.
- Provincialism of Self, 1, 375.
- Prudence, Dante on, 4, 246.
- Prussian army, the national instinct in, 2, 100.
- Prynne, William, his inscriptions on the walls of the Tower, 2, 71.
- Pseudo-classicism, its two forms, 2, 134; the growing distaste for, 4, 8.
- Public, the, a dear old domestic bird, 5, 94.
- Public debt, the only one absolutely sure of payment, 3, 245.
- Public lands, a fair price to be paid for, 5, 227.
- Public libraries. *See* Libraries, public.
- Public men, 2, 311.
- Public opinion, effect on the Yankee, 1, 77; escape from its tyranny in Italy, 124; its power, 2, 99; its efficiency in a democracy, 5, 182; its importance, 6, 34; influence of the telegraph upon, 175; *also*, 2, 386; 5, 129.
- Public school has done for imagination, 1, 107.
- Public speaking, difficulties of, at the present day, 6, 8.
- Public spirit of the founders of Massachusetts, 6, 147.
- Pückler-Muskau on England, 3, 231.
- Puff, Mr., 4, 22.
- Puns, 3, 53.
- Punch, attempts at Yankeeisms, 2, 135.
- Punch's theatre, Hamon's picture of, Carlyle's histories compared to, 2, 104.
- Punishments in Dante and in the Wisdom of Solomon, 4, 212 n.
- Puppet-show, the world a, in Carlyle's histories, 2, 104.
- Puritan, cares nothing for art, 1, 76; compared with the Cavalier, 2, 71.
- Puritan preachers, 2, 13.
- Puritan temper Judaized by the English Bible, 4, 83.
- Puritans, English, their change upon coming into power, 2, 6; the builders of America, 13; Lecky on their attitude toward witchcraft, 377 n.
- Puritans, of New England, the modern charge that they were fanatics, 2, 6; different in their conditions from the Puritans in England, 8; enthusiasts but not fanatics, 9; men of business, 9, 72; their conception of

- the state, 10, 75; their dealings with sectaries, 10; their narrowness and gloominess, 13; the reality of their political ideas, 13; their view of education, 18; in what respect they were intolerant, 18; not men "before their time," 19; as seen in the "Winthrop Papers," 21; their decline prophesied by Williams, 72; cause of their narrowness, 73; their purpose to clear away abuses, 75; their conversion of the Indians, 3, 219; their object and their spirit, 246; their feeling in founding Harvard College, 6, 140; justly commemorated by their descendants, 141; the noble character and quality of the first settlers, 144; narrowness and formalism of the second generation, 145. *See also*, New England.
- Puritanism, tried to drive out nature with a pitchfork, 1, 78; compared to a ship inwardly on fire, 78; Emerson the herald of its decease, 364, and the embodiment of its spirit, 365; Hawthorne the unwilling poet of the Puritanism of the past, 365; its spirit seeking a new outlet in Transcendentalism, 367; the embodiment of Christian truth, 2, 2; not responsible for the witchcraft delusion in New England, 10; the decline of, 12; laid the egg of Democracy, 13; traced in American characteristics, 14; its earnestness, 67; a religion of Fear rather than Love, 67; became an empty formalism, 74; its attitude toward witchcraft, 377; anxious for evidence of the supernatural, 377; its character shown in the victims of the Salem witchcraft, 394; its strength and weakness, 4, 116; the prose of Bunyan and the verse of Milton its great monuments, 117; Spenser's sympathy with its more generous side, 314; its different shades, 314 n; *also*, 3, 4.
- Puseyism, a hint that Protestantism has blundered, 1, 196.
- Putnam, Anne, Jr., one of the possessed girls in Salem, 2, 391.
- Puttenham on correct English, 3, 8.
- Pyrrhus, elephants of, German learning compared to, 2, 166.
- Pythagoras, 1, 379.
- Quaker grammar, 2, 64.
- Quakers, care nothing for art, 1, 76; Coddington sends a defence of, to J. Winthrop, Jr., 2, 64; on the manifestation of God's wrath at the execution of Robinson and Stevenson, 66; Puritan dealings with, not to be lightly judged, 67.
- Quarles, his *Enchiridion* reprinted in the "Library of Old Authors," 1, 254; examples of his style, 4, 21.
- Quarrels, Italian, anecdotes of, 1, 166, 167.
- Quatrains, Dryden on, 3, 135.
- Quibbles in words, 3, 53.
- Quincy, Edmund, his life of his father, 2, 293.
- QUINCY, JOSIAH, a great public character, 2, 272-312; his character trained under democracy, 287; his public activity, 288, 292; an antique Roman, 288; the Boston of his early life, 289; the many changes during his lifetime, 291; his family, 291; his life beautiful and fortunate, 292; Edmund Quincy's Life of, 293; his account of his mother, 296; his early education, 297; at college, 299; his marriage, 299; his public life, 300; his thoroughness and earnestness, 301; declines a duel, 302; opposes the Louisiana purchase, 302; his boldness in speech, 302; Mayor of Boston, 303; arrested for fast driving, 305; President of Harvard College, 305; his endearing peculiarities, 306; his dry humor, 306; his kindness and considerateness, 306; his *esprit de corps*, 307; his literary productions, 307; his industry, 308; his old age, 308; his remarks on death, 308; the value of his life, 309, 311; anecdote of his courtesy, 310; a man of *quality*, 310; never forfeited public respect, 311; lines of Dryden's applied to, 3, 172; on college life, 6, 163.
- Quincy, Mrs. Josiah, 2, 299.
- Quincy, Josiah, Jr., 2, 291, 295.
- Quinquina. *See* Cinchona.
- Quintilian on Seneca, 3, 164.
- Quixote, Don. *See* Cervantes.
- Quotations, from the classics, the charm of, 2, 129; Dryden's inaccuracy in using, 3, 124.
- R. = Reemie, the barber.
- R. —, Mr., of W. = Mr. Ripley, of Waltham.
- R. M. = Royall Morse.
- Rabelais, his humor, 1, 278; 2, 90; *also*, 3, 362.
- Rachel and Leah, 1, 374.
- Racine, 3, 65; *Andromaque*, 147 n; *Bajazet*, Dryden on, 160; *Berevice*, Voltaire on, 160.
- Rail-riding, riding at Tivoli compared to, 1, 138.
- Railroad journey, effects of, 1, 5.
- Railroads, American, 2, 71.
- Railroads, Italian, how planned and built, 1, 150.
- Rain, signs of, 1, 16, 20; ride to Subiaco in, 179.

- Rainbow, across the waterfall at Tivoli, **1**, 128; Vaughan on, **3**, 222.
- Rainy day indoors at Kineo, Maine, **1**, 19.
- Raleigh, Sir Walter, **2**, 22; **3**, 16; on writing modern history, **4**, 319 n; **6**, 62.
- Rambaldi, Benvenuto. *See* Benvenuto.
- Ramler, Karl Wilhelm, **2**, 197; on Lessing's dangerous way of speaking his opinion, 199; Forster on, 200 n.
- Ramsay, Allan, **2**, 220.
- Randolph, Robert, **1**, 308.
- Rantoul, Robert, **6**, 156.
- Raphael, **3**, 66.
- Raspberries the solace of the pedestrian, **3**, 201.
- Ravenna, Dante at, **4**, 135, 136.
- Raymond, Mr., at the Philadelphia convention, **5**, 286.
- Raynouard's *Lexique roman* cited, **1**, 328.
- Reaction, **5**, 126, 178.
- Reading, the habit tyrannical, **1**, 21; lack of, in Rome, 156; browsing, **2**, 191; the world of thought opened to us by, **6**, 84; the choice of, 85; illustrated by the Wallachian legend of Bakála, 85; its influence on character, 86; the way to read, 86; desultory reading unprofitable, 86; harmfulness of reading newspaper gossip, 88; attention to the supreme books or to one great author recommended, 89; desultory reading the only way in which time may be profitably wasted, 89; Bacon on the method and purpose of, 90; value of translations of foreign literature, 92. *See also*, Books.
- Ready-made Age, the, **1**, 39.
- Ready-made clothes, reason of the demand for, **1**, 39.
- Real, the, distinguished from the actual, **6**, 81.
- Real Presence typifies the secret of the power of the Roman Church, **1**, 195.
- Real property, **6**, 80.
- Realism in Dante, **4**, 161.
- Realistic novel invented by Fielding, **6**, 64.
- Realistic school, imaginative creations preferred to, **6**, 128.
- Reality, Carlyle's loyalty to, **2**, 118.
- Reason, its development the highest use of our experience, **2**, 110; a finger-post which points where we choose to turn it, **3**, 195; Dante on, **4**, 220; typified by Virgil in the *Divina Commedia*, 221.
- Rebellion, **5**, 81, 203; to be crushed promptly, 85; the right of, 85.
- REBELLION, THE, ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES, **5**, 118-152. For details, *see* American Civil War.
- Rebellion Record. *See* Moore, Frank.
- RECONSTRUCTION, **5**, 210-238; our first duty in respect to, that democracy receive no detriment, 217; a uniform rule not likely to be suitable for all cases, 217; the problem of the negro, 223; confiscation of property unwise, 226; the Southern population to be encouraged to become landholders, 227; the freedmen to be made voters, 228, 237, 260, 280, 303, 311; their inherent right to the suffrage in a democracy, 230; the proposition to settle the negroes in a separate district unwise, 231; on certain confused ideas in regard to the position of the Southern States, 236, 258; our right to exact indemnity for the past and security for the future, 236, 256, 280, 308, 316; the terms of readmission to be definitely settled beforehand, 237; temporary expedients to be discarded in favor of an enduring policy, 238; the demands of New England with regard to, 242; the States to be admitted for the first time to a real union, 258; no hasty compromise to be adopted, 263; its basis changed by the issue of the war, 300; the terms imposed not harsh, 322; the conditions of the franchise not interfered with, 323. *See also*, United States in 1865 and 1866.
- Reduplication of sense, instances from the Greek, Shakespeare, and Milton, **3**, 50.
- Reed, Professor, editor of Wordsworth's *Memoirs*, **4**, 338 n.
- Reed, of Apollo, and of Pan, **4**, 403.
- Reemie, the Cambridge barber, **1**, 61.
- Reeves, **3**, 62.
- Refinement, its true character, **6**, 62.
- Reflections in the water, **1**, 30; at sunset, 34.
- Reformation, its different stages, **3**, 4; its effect on England, **4**, 293; the germ of political and social revolution, **6**, 14.
- Reformers, of the transcendental movement, **1**, 363; *Don Quixote* a satire upon doctrinaire reformers, **6**, 123; the movement of reforms seems slow to, 215; need to take long views, 215; *also*, **4**, 238; **6**, 189.
- Rehearsal, The. *See* Villiers.
- Reimarus, Elise, Lessing's letters to, **2**, 209, 213.
- Religion, Dante on, **4**, 206; Wordsworth's attitude toward, **6**, 103; the instinct to fashion God in the image of man, 104.
- Religious instinct of the Anglo-Saxon, **3**, 318.

- Religious poetry, wretched quality of much that is so called, **1**, 253.
 Religious sentiment, **2**, 265.
 Rembrandt, **3**, 233.
 Rembrandt groups in the Cambridge-port inn-yards, **1**, 70.
 Reminiscences of great men, scantiness of, **1**, 74.
 Renaissance, **4**, 266; Keats a modern example of, **1**, 244.
 Renan on the development of language, **3**, 184 n.
 Repeating verses, a little girl's, **1**, 188.
 Repetition, in public speaking, **6**, 9; wearisome and profitless, 100.
 Repose of Keats's poetry, **1**, 246.
 Reprinting worthless books, **1**, 303.
 Reprints, of old books, **1**, 251, 318; value of literalness in, 263, 272.
 Republican party, its purpose and position in 1860, **5**, 35; its strength in a moral aversion to slavery, 36; its object to hem slavery in, not to abolish it, 42; the only truly conservative party, 43; forbearance and moderation required on the establishment of peace, 233; Seward's relations to, 294; its policy inspired by the people themselves, not by leaders, 317; the attempt to stir up and utilize the passions of the War, **6**, 211.
 Repudiation, **3**, 242.
 Reputation, insecurity and importance of, **1**, 227.
 Resinous perfume of the forest, **1**, 31.
 Responsibility, freedom from, felt in Italy, **1**, 124; personal, **5**, 129.
 Restoration of buildings, constructive criticism compared to, **6**, 121.
 Restraint, the hotbed of license, **3**, 151.
 Resurrection-men of literature, **1**, 303.
 Retribution, Dante's ideas of, **4**, 177; examples of, eagerly recognized, **5**, 127.
Retrospective Review, **1**, 248.
 Reuchlin, **1**, 364; his Latin style, **2**, 167.
 Revelation, Dante on, **4**, 220.
 Revery, awakening from, **3**, 222; compared to fish in a stream, **4**, 334.
 Revival of letters, **4**, 266.
 Revivals, **4**, 256.
 Revolution, American. *See* American Revolution.
 Revolutions, the Saxon success in effecting, **3**, 319; said never to go backward, **5**, 84; moderation in times of, 172.
 Revolutionists, foreign, connected with the transcendental movement, **1**, 363.
Revue des Deux Mondes, its accounts of American society, **3**, 241.
 Rhetoric, its laws, **3**, 31. *See also*, Style.
 Rhetoric and literature distinguished, **3**, 301.
 Rhett, Robert, **5**, 66.
 Rhodes, Hugh, on domestic servants, **2**, 46.
 Rhyme, in the French drama, **3**, 158; in Gower, 329, 336; Milton's use of, **4**, 97.
 Dryden on, **3**, 109, 135, 138, 154, 155, 168; Phillips on, **4**, 22; Waller on its necessity in tragedy, 22; Milton on, 115.
 Rhyme-wraiths, **4**, 97.
 Rhymsters, Jonson on, **3**, 156.
 Rich, Mrs., her appearance, **1**, 136.
 Rich men, the possibilities of, imagined, **1**, 84; in America, **6**, 96; libraries and universities founded by, 191.
 Richard, Duke of Normandy, arbitrator in a case between the Devil and an Angel, **2**, 368.
 Richardson, Fielding's opinion of, **6**, 62.
 Richelieu, **1**, 25.
 Riches, the popular measure of success, **6**, 173; their use and their danger, 173. *See also*, Wealth.
 Richier, Voltaire's secretary, **2**, 187.
 Richter, his humor, **1**, 278; **2**, 165, 170; his influence on Carlyle, 88; his sentiment, 165; influenced by Cervantes, **6**, 135; *also*, **2**, 187.
 Ridicule, especially unpleasant in England, **1**, 226; sensitiveness to, fostered by provincialism, **4**, 12.
 Riding, Spenser on, **4**, 351.
 Right, the, essential antiquity of, **5**, 13.
 Rights of Man and the wrongs of men, **6**, 16.
 Righteousness, the theme of Dante, **4**, 154.
 Rigoux, Maître, name of the Devil in De la Rue's confession, **2**, 335.
 Rilievo, the bridge between sculpture and painting, **4**, 119 n.
 Rimbault, Dr., editor of Overbury's works, **1**, 255.
 Ripheus in the *Divine Comedy*, **4**, 250.
 Ripley, Mr., of Waltham, at Emerson's lectures, **1**, 355.
 Ritson, his character, **1**, 331; compared with Hazlitt as an editor, 331; his *Bibliographica Poetica*, **4**, 265.
 Rivalry, a powerful motive with Michael Angelo, **1**, 206.
 Rivarol, his translation of the *Divina Commedia*, **4**, 143; on Dante, 162, 164, 272.
 River-driver, description of M., a famous one, **1**, 31.

- Rivers, with low banks, **1**, 33; sudden rise of, in Italy, 180; Chaucer's best tales compared to, **3**, 355; their course compared to that of a great statesman, **5**, 196.
- Road-making in Cambridge, **1**, 55.
- Roads, Winter a mender of, in old times, **3**, 264.
- Robespierre, **2**, 89.
- Robin, a name for Satan, **2**, 339, 365.
- Robins. *See under* Birds.
- Robins, John, the last great Antichrist of the Muggletonians, **1**, 81.
- Robinson, Crabb, visits to Wordsworth, **3**, 271; on Wordsworth, **4**, 385 n, 400 n.
- Robinson, John, on the character of the New England state, **6**, 97.
- Robinson, William, the Quaker, **2**, 66.
- Robinson Crusoe*. *See* Defoe.
- Roc, **1**, 112.
- Rochester, Earl of, **3**, 151.
- Rocket, fancy compared to, **2**, 81; McClellan's reputation compared to, **5**, 95.
- Rod, Carlyle's increasing employment of the, **2**, 94.
- Rojate, Italy, **1**, 177.
- Roland, Song of, **2**, 152; **3**, 310; **6**, 116.
- Roman du Renart* cited, **1**, 327.
- Roman de la Rose*, the treatment of final and medial *e*, **3**, 346; *also*, 362.
- Roman army, slaves in, **5**, 127.
- Roman Catholic church, has not forgotten the eremitic instinct, **1**, 90; dead in Italy, 155; what it does for worship, 194; has kept her faith in the imagination, 195; provides for both soul and body in her worship, 195; the understanding her great foe, 196; provides for the childish in men, 196; has adapted herself to the wants and weaknesses of human nature, 197; the heir of many Buddhist forms of worship, 200; its ceremonies not valued by the people, 204; sameness of its ceremonies, 204; its vast estate of tradition, **2**, 274; Dryden's leaning toward, **3**, 187; attitude of the Amer. Tract Soc. toward, **5**, 5.
- Roman churches, their clumsy magnificence and want of proportion, **1**, 205.
- Roman columns, **1**, 205.
- Roman Emperor, Dante on his supremacy, **4**, 153.
- Roman Empire, its shadow felt in Rome, **1**, 192; Dante's arguments for its universal sovereignty, **4**, 162.
- Roman images, a substitute suggested, **1**, 317.
- Roman literature. *See* Latin literature.
- ROMAN MOSAIC, A FEW BITS OF, **1**, 189-217.
- Roman noses, **3**, 271.
- Roman Revolution of '48, the beggars with invested funds the staunchest reactionaries, **5**, 28.
- Roman villas, ruins of, **1**, 139.
- Romans, time of no value to, **1**, 131; a grave people since '49, 150; do not value the ceremonies of the church, 204. *See also*, Italians.
- Romans, ancient, despised Greek literature, **1**, 100; their national feeling, **2**, 282; fond of country life, **3**, 261; their genius for politics rather than art, 305.
- Romance poetry before Dante, **4**, 228.
- Romances of chivalry, question of the Provençal origin of, **3**, 309; Norman influence upon, 314; their longwindedness, 325; the attempt to allegorize them, 361; *Don Quixote* more than a mere parody on, **6**, 123; *also*, **3**, 361. *See also*, Chansons de geste.
- Romantic movement, feebleness and introspection of, **2**, 158.
- Romantic poetry, German, **2**, 139.
- Romantic school foreshadowed by Collins, **4**, 3.
- Romanticism, Lessing the unconscious founder of, **2**, 222.
- Rome, its early history interpreted by the territory around it, **1**, 48; the mother-country of every boy, 124; unchanged in most respects, 125; well called the Eternal City, 131; the approach to, in a diligence, 151; scenes of a spring day in, 152; the road to, from Civita Vecchia, 189; the rude shock to Fancy on arrival, 189; the French soldiers, 189, 190; anachronisms and inconsistencies, 190; the presence of the imperial ghost, 191; its solitudes, 192; the laboratory of a mysterious enchanteress, 197; the modern churches, 205; the beggars, 206; deformities exhibited in the street, 209; situation of the city and its relation to others in early days, 211; the Villa Albani, 214; the garden of the French Academy, 215; amusing scene at the fountain of Trevi, 215; the police, 216; Keats's lodgings in the Piazza di Spagna, 239 n; Dante on, **4**, 216 n; on the course of its history, 241; on the miracles of its history, 247; St. Augustine on, 241. *Capitol*, its foundations, **1**, 192; *Colosseum*, 205; *Forum*, the deliberate manner of the excavators described, 210; *Piazza Barberina*, 152; *Ponte Sant Angelo*, 190; crowds on, 201; *St. Peter's* as

- seen from a distance, 151; compared to Vesuvius, 151; disappointment common in the first sight of, 192; Protestant prejudices to be put aside, 193; the throne of a mighty dynasty, 194; the magic circle of a mysterious enchantress, 197; statistics, 197; its temperature different from that of Rome, 198; liked by Americans sooner than by Englishmen, 198; the Easter poms, 200, 204; noon and twilight effects, 200; the illumination, 201; the *Scalinita*, 178.
- Romulus and Remus, 2, 14, 362.
- Rosa, Salvator, 3, 261.
- Roscoe, 4, 54.
- Rosecrans, Gen., at Murfreesboro, 5, 109.
- Roses and cabbages, 1, 350.
- Rosseter, Bryan, pleads for remission of taxes, 2, 60.
- Rossetti, Gabriele, on Dante, 4, 170 n.
- Rossetti, D. G., his translations from the Italian poets, 4, 229 n.
- Rossetti, Miss M. F., on Dante's style, 4, 169 n; her *Shadow of Dante* commended, 173; on Beatrice in the *Div. Com.*, 222; on the meaning of the "wood obscure," 222; on Dante's "second death," 225.
- Rossetti, W. M., on a passage of Dante, 4, 177 n.
- Rotation in office, its absurdity, 6, 214.
- ROUSSEAU AND THE SENTIMENTALISTS, 2, 232-271; his political wisdom compared with Burke's, 234; the lasting nature of his influence, 237, 265; the basis of sincerity, beyond sentimentalism and rhetoric, 237, 266; a faith and ardor of conviction in him in spite of inconsistencies, 244; his faith in the goodness of man and God, 245; a good logician, 245; his original power, 246; his influence on contemporary thought inconsistent with enduring greatness, 246; his self-conceit and self-distrust, 247; allowed himself to be worshipped by women, 247; his father's weak moral fibre, 248; he mistakes emotion for conviction, 250; his self-flattery in believing himself peculiar, 258, 260; his confessions, 261; 6, 92; his inconsistencies and paradoxes, 2, 262; his disordered organization, 262; the symptoms of the French Revolution seen in his works, 263; the foster-father of modern democracy, 264; the weak point in his political system, 264; his religious sentiment strong, his moral nature weak, 265; Cowper his nearest congener in English literature, 266; his view of Nature, 266; difficulties in judging him, 268; allowances to be made for his nationality and training, 270; intensity and persuasiveness of his writings, 270; never false, 270; set the fashion of melodious whining, 212; compared with Voltaire as to asceticism, 245; his sentimentality, 1, 376; made the love of nature fashionable, 3, 260; his fallacies exposed by Spenser, 4, 350; also, 3, 262; 4, 301.
- on his father's conduct, 2, 248; on French poetry, 162.
- Voltaire on, 1, 378; Burke on, 2, 232; Johnson on, 235; Thomas Moore on, 238.
- Discours sur l'Inégalité*, Voltaire on, 2, 176; — *Letter to the Abp. of Paris*, 263; — *Rousseau juge de Jean Jacques*, 263.
- Routine, effect of its removal, 2, 370.
- Royalty, its dependence on the tailor, 2, 69.
- Roydon, Matthew, his lines on Sidney applied to Emerson, 1, 349, 360.
- Rubens, 3, 233; compared with Dryden, 115.
- Rüdiger, Herr, Lessing arranges his library, 2, 186.
- Ruins adopted and beautified by Nature, 1, 140.
- Rule, Miss, called Anarchy, 1, 65.
- Ruprecht, Knecht, 2, 365.
- Ruskin, on Dante, 4, 147, 163; on countries without castles and cathedrals, 6, 139; also, 2, 233; 3, 262; 6, 93.
- Rutebeuf, his miracle-play of Theophilus described, 2, 330; his treatment of final and medial *e*, 3, 346; his *Pharisian and Secrestain*, 346.
- Ruth, Mrs., Hugh Peter's coquetting with, 2, 27.
- Ruth, Emil, on Dante, 4, 228 n.
- Rynders, Capt., 5, 156.
- S. = Francis Sales.
- S., champion of the county = Stedman.
- Sackville, Thomas, *Gorboduc* or *Ferrex and Porrex*, 4, 304.
- Sacramental wafer, 3, 318.
- Sacred poetry before Dante, 4, 230.
- Saddles in Italy, 1, 137.
- Sagas compared with the Romances, 3, 313.
- Sailor, the, his unsteady roll in physical and moral gait, 1, 38.
- Sails of a ship in the moonlight, 1, 104.
- St. Elmo's fires, 1, 118.
- St. Hilaire, Dean of, 1, 90.
- St. John. See Bolingbroke.
- St. Pierre, 1, 376; 3, 262.

- St. Preux, **3**, 209; his love-letters, **2**, 208.
- St. René Taillandier on the *Divina Commedia* in Spain, **4**, 143.
- St. Simon, true, though not accurate, **2**, 285; the secret of his art in picturesque writing, **4**, 65.
- St. Vitus dance, **1**, 209.
- Sainte-Beuve, on connection with the world, **1**, 374; his criticism makes its subject luminous, **2**, 166; on Octave Feuillet, **6**, 62.
- Saints, legends of, relation to Ovid's *Fasti*, **3**, 302.
- Saints and martyrs, the legends of, **4**, 230.
- Sais, the figure at, **1**, 47.
- Saladin in the miracle-play of *Theophilus*, **2**, 330.
- Salem, Underhill complains of a lack of military discipline at, **2**, 60.
- Salem witchcraft, Upham's history of, **2**, 388; the character of the minister, Parris, 389; the demoniacal girls in his family, 390; in the light of the Littleton cases in 1720, 391; the trials, 392; the victims all protested innocence, 394; the reaction against it from the people, not the authorities, 395.
- Sales, Francis, reminiscences of, **1**, 97.
- Salt Lake City, **3**, 212.
- Saltonstall, Richard, letter to J. Winthrop, Jr., on Prynne, **2**, 71.
- Samplers, **1**, 187.
- Samson compared to Herakles, **2**, 134.
- Samson Agonistes*. See Milton.
- Samson, Abbot, in Italy in 1159, **1**, 126.
- Sancho Panza. See Cervantes — *Don Quixote*.
- Sand, George, **2**, 236; **3**, 262; on art, **1**, 379; on autobiography, **2**, 258; her coarseness, **6**, 60.
- Sand, Maurice, his caricature of America in the *Revue*, **3**, 240.
- Sandras, E. G., *Étude sur G. Chaucer*, **3**, 291, 298.
- Sandys, George, **1**, 313; **4**, 358 n.
- Sannazaro, **4**, 301.
- Sansovino on the date of Dante's birth, **4**, 121.
- Sant' Antonio, Ponte, expedition to, with Storg, **1**, 133; loneliness of the place, 140.
- Santo Stefano, **1**, 167.
- Satan, belief in his power, **2**, 327; compared to James II. at St. Germain's, 328; the idea of a compact with him developed under Christianity, 329; the contract itself seldom produced, 332; generally the loser by the bargain, 332; confessions by witches of dealings with, 334-346; appearance as a black dog, 334, 338; his names, 335, 339, 347, 348, 364, 365; his appearance described, 335, 340, 343, 346; his appearance as a goat, 337, 347, 350; degraded by popular superstition to a vulgar scarecrow, 346; Dr. More on the stench left at his disappearance, 347; his cloven foot, 347, 348; the raven his peculiar bird, 348; his touch cold or burning, 364; stories of his doings on various occasions, 366; his school of magic in Toledo, 368; worshipped by the Indians, 376; makes no express compact with minors, 380; of Dante and Milton, **4**, 162; the symbol of materialism in Dante, 204 n; the first great secessionist, **5**, 53. See also, Devil.
- Satire, **4**, 20; Dryden on, **3**, 176; of Dryden and Pope compared, 177; of Dante and Chaucer compared, 323; of Chaucer and Langland, 331, 333; of Chaucer, 360; of Fielding, **6**, 66.
- Saturday Review* on American politics in 1861, **5**, 75.
- Saul seeking his father's asses, Carlyle contrasted with, **2**, 98.
- Saunders, George, **5**, 158.
- Sausages, Italian, **1**, 123.
- Savage, Richard, **2**, 236; his Latinisms, **3**, 184.
- Savagius, Jacobus, wrote a treatise against witchcraft, **2**, 383.
- Savonarola, **4**, 120.
- Saxon. See also, Anglo-Saxon.
- Saxon language, its character, **1**, 261; never, to any extent, a literary language, **3**, 11; foreign words introduced into, with difficulty, 12; Bosworth on, 15.
- Scaliger, J. C., on Erasmus, **3**, 114 n.
- Scalinata, in Rome, **1**, 178.
- Scenery, its value often estimated by the cost of the ticket, **1**, 1. See also, Landscape; Nature.
- Sceptical age reads God in a prose translation, **3**, 102.
- Scepticism, of modern travellers, **1**, 109; Lessing's early scepticism, **2**, 185; of Rousseau, 245; in the 17th cent., 371, 375; the first cousin of credulity, 396; caused by materialism, 397; of Hamlet, **3**, 82; characteristic of Dryden's age, 102; dilettantism its twin sister, **4**, 160; also, **3**, 187.
- Scheffer, Ary, his *Christus Consolator* in a Prayer-Book without the slave, **5**, 7.
- Schelling, Emerson before the Φ . B. K. compared to, **1**, 367.
- Schiller, his Pegasus in yoke, **1**, 203; his verses to Goethe quoted, **2**, 124; some of his lyrical poems too long, 168; his *Götz* and *Robbers*, 222;

- Coleridge's debt to, **6**, 71; *also*, **2**, 187.
- on the great poet, **2**, 111; on the gods of Greece, 327.
- Schlegel, on Shakespeare, **3**, 68; Coleridge's debt to, **6**, 71.
- Schlosser on Dante, **4**, 152, 163.
- Schmidt, Julian, as a critic, **2**, 166.
- Scholars, their meddling in politics objected to by politicians, **6**, 190.
- Scholarship, its riches an enduring possession, **6**, 80; its results, 87; necessity of having a definite aim, 89. *See also*, American scholarship; Learning.
- School-children in old times, **2**, 17.
- School-girls' letter style of composition, **3**, 356.
- School-house, village, described, **2**, 16; recollections stirred by, 16.
- School-house of Women* cited, **1**, 333, 346.
- Schoolmaster, Carlyle's attitude toward the world compared to, **2**, 94.
- Schools. *See* American schools; French schools; Public school; education.
- Schoolcraft on the legend of the werewolf among the Indians, **2**, 362.
- Schröder, **3**, 66.
- Science, its condition in the days of witchcraft, **2**, 373; the teaching of, **6**, 160; the noblest definition of, 161.
- Science and morals, the advance in, compared, **4**, 254.
- Sciences, Dante on, **4**, 201; their place in a library, **6**, 93.
- Scientific spirit of the present day, **1**, 109.
- Scot, Reginald, his Discovery of witchcraft, **2**, 384.
- Scotch ballad-poetry, **4**, 268.
- Scotch barnacle, **1**, 276.
- Scotch gardeners in Cambridge, **1**, 65.
- Scotch Highlanders, costume changed by law, **2**, 69; the clansmen ruthlessly dispossessed by the Chiefs, **5**, 320.
- Scotch mist, its penetrativeness, **3**, 236.
- Scotch poetry of the 15th cent., **4**, 267.
- Scotchmen, effect of imagination on, **2**, 107.
- Scotland, witches burned for the last time in 1722, **2**, 387; its loyalty in spite of rebellions, **5**, 67.
- Scott, Dr., apparition seen by, **2**, 323.
- Scott, Sir Walter, his toriyism, **2**, 109; on Dryden's jealousy, **3**, 175; Wordsworth meets him, **4**, 387; Wordsworth on, 399 n; on Coleridge, **6**, 73; his use of descriptions of nature, 111; the *Antiquary* influenced by Cervantes, 136; *also*, **2**, 120, 155; **6**, 95.
- Scott, Gen. Winfield C., **5**, 62.
- Scudéry, Mlle. de, **4**, 318.
- Sculptors, **3**, 282. *See also*, Greek sculpture.
- Scurrility, **4**, 269.
- Sea in the imagination of village boys, **1**, 69.
- SEA, AT, **1**, 100-112; best seen from the shore, 100; steam fatal to its romance, 101; a calm described, 101; monotony of the life, 101; the flying-fish, 102; the phosphorescence, 103; moonlight on the sails, 104; the sun, 105; the ocean-horizon, 105; the sunrise, 106; the sea-serpent, 107; anecdotes of the Chief Mate, 114; the social proprieties at meal times, 116.
- Sea-captains of the old school, **2**, 289.
- Sea-moss, the sensibility of great poets compared to, **4**, 413; certain thoughts and emotions compared to, 414.
- Sea-serpent, not to be lightly given up, **1**, 107; an old fisherman on the horse-mackerel theory, 108.
- Sea-shore compared to the boundary line between ideal and matter-of-fact, **4**, 265.
- Sea-waves, Homer's verse compared to, **1**, 292.
- Sea-weed at sunrise, **1**, 106.
- Sebasticook River, **1**, 9.
- Seboomok Pond, afternoon on its shore, **1**, 30.
- Secession, the danger of, diminishing in 1860, **5**, 41; Buchanan's attitude toward, 47; the right of, untenable under the Constitution, 48, 72; threats of, unheeded at the North, 51; means chaos and rebellion, 53; the principle applied to other relations, 53; the absurdity of the right developed, 54, 201; must not be permitted, 68; the one question in hand at the beginning of Lincoln's administration, 84; the doctrine obliterates every notion of law and precedent, 87; Pollard's attempt to state the grounds of, 133, 134; probably not originally intended by the Southern states, 135, 159; the way prepared for, by political tendencies, 138; traced by Greeley to slavery and the doctrine of state rights, 139; the Southern people educated in the belief in, 149; its assured retribution, 177; the treason involved in, 255; the discussion of, useless after the war, 276; distinction between the right to secede and the ability to do so, 297.
- Secession kite, bobs of, **5**, 66.

- Secessionists. *See* United States — *Southern States*.
- Sectarianism, Lessing on, **2**, 215; of the Wordsworthians, **4**, 354.
- Seeing, the Chief Mate's sharpness of sight, **1**, 115.
- Séguier, Pres., on witchcraft, **2**, 386.
- Selden, on opinion and affection, **2**, 199; on heresy, 216; annotations on Drayton, **4**, 280.
- Self-abasement, **2**, 59.
- Self-conceit, **2**, 156, 247.
- Self-confidence of Lessing, **2**, 185.
- Self-consciousness, **1**, 374, 375; **3**, 81; intensified by Christianity, **2**, 136; of modern imaginative literature, **3**, 292; of Milton, **4**, 116.
- Self-deception an element in the witchcraft troubles, **2**, 370.
- Self-examination destroys originality, **2**, 259.
- Self-flattery, **2**, 259.
- Self-government, **5**, 305.
- Self-importance, foreign travel a remedy for, **1**, 45.
- Self-interest, **5**, 319.
- Self-knowledge, **3**, 230; importance of, **1**, 44.
- Self-made men, **2**, 292; **3**, 250.
- Self-reliance, the argument for, as drawn from the example of great men, **4**, 382.
- Self-respect of American yeomen, **1**, 186.
- Self-trust, **4**, 379.
- Semmes, **5**, 310.
- Seneca, Quintilian on, **3**, 164.
- Sensationalism, of modern literature, **2**, 82; illustrated by the farmer at the burning of the meeting-house, **83**; of Carlyle, 106.
- Senses, necessity of educating and refining them, **1**, 175.
- Sensitiveness to criticism a common failing, **3**, 231.
- Sensuous and sensual in poetry, **4**, 317.
- Sentiment, **1**, 100; quickly brought down by Humbug, 196; distinguished from sentimentalism, **2**, 252; its effect on state policy, **6**, 39.
- Sentiments and actions, **2**, 243.
- Sentimentalism, **2**, 156, 229; with respect to Nature, **1**, 376; of Carlyle, **2**, 92; of Burke, 233; as a substitute for performing one's duty, 248; disjoins practice from theory, 249; sentiment distinguished from, 252; little trace of, among the ancients, 253; Petrarch the first modern example of, 253; its sickly taint, 266; courts publicity while shunning the contact of men, 268.
- Burke on, **2**, 232; Fielding's contempt for, **6**, 62.
- Sentimentalist, his character to be investigated when he teaches morals, **2**, 243; dwells in unrealities, 247; selfishness of, 250; the spiritual hypochondriac, 250; insists on taking his emotion neat, 252; always his own ideal, 258; his self-consciousness finally produces self-deception, 258; Rousseau the most perfect type, 262; his view of life, 267; exaggerates the importance of his own personality, 268; supposed character of his brain, 271.
- Sentimentalists, **2**, 239.
- Sermons of the New England clergy, **6**, 154.
- Serravalle, Giov. da, Latin translation of Dante, **4**, 146.
- Servants, difficulty of obtaining, in early New England, **2**, 42, 70; inconveniences of employing Indians, 43; decline in their quality witnessed by Shakespeare, and by Gonzales in 1730, 45; Southey on, in 1824, and Hugh Rhodes on, in 1577, 46; in Boston, in earlier days, 290.
- Seven Years War, the Prussian national instinct an important factor in, **2**, 100; Lessing's feelings toward, 203.
- Severn, Mr., friend of Keats, went to Italy with him, **1**, 237; his studio in Rome, 239 n.
- Seward, W. H., represents the most advanced doctrines of his party, **5**, 34; his power as an orator, 34; his office of bear-leader in the President's tour, 290; fears for the safety of the platform at Niagara, 290; his motives, career, and character discussed, 292; his course an exhibition of tumbling, 295; his arguments on the status of the seceding states, 302; his dealings with the Fenians, 322.
- SEWARD-JOHNSON REACTION, 1866, **5**, 283-327.
- Sewing-machine, its inventor inferior to the great men of old, **2**, 281.
- Shadows of leaves and boughs, **3**, 221.
- Shadwell, as poet-laureate, **3**, 107; Dryden's quarrel with, 178, 179 n.
- Shakespeare, his house, **1**, 48; the country-gentleman who travelled up to London with him, 74; never in Italy, 127; quotations from, 140; unmatched in ancient art, 212; Marlowe his teacher in versification, 277; his humor, 278; his creative faculty, 278; his superiority to his contemporaries, 279; power of condensation, 281; his common sense impregnated with imagination, **2**, 81; Wieland's translation, 222; reality of, 225; genius of, 244;

- action of his imagination, 319; **6**, 52.
- SHAKESPEARE ONCE MORE, **3**, 1-94; the conditions of his time favorable, 2; essentially an observer and incapable of partisanship, 2; condition of the English language, 5; its strength and freshness, 8; Shakespeare's use of language, 10, 28, 41; obscurities in his writing, 17, 27; the labors of his editors and commentators, 19, 23; the value of the first folio of 1623, 20; the character of the quartos, 21; the universality and exactness of his knowledge and sympathies, 24; compared in this respect with other writers, 25; his probable intention of editing his works, 26; the necessary qualifications of an editor, 27; Shakespeare's style, 36; impossibility of imitating it, 37; its simplicity, 39; quality of his imagination, 40; his charm even in translation, 42; his power of description, 42; his sympathy with his characters, 43; his classical knowledge obtained at second-hand, 46; **1**, 244; profited by converse with cultivated men, **3**, 47, 223 n; parallel passages and expressions in Greek dramas noted, 49; criticised as playing with language, 52; this the common fault of his time, 53; his tragedies compared with the Greek as to motive and action, 58, 92; the symbolism of the *Tempest* traced, 59; conscious of his own powers, 61; his permanent supremacy in literature, 65; on the German stage, 66; German commentators, 67; **6**, 122; the object and the success of his work, **3**, 68; anachronisms considered, 68; the introduction of low characters and comic scenes in tragedy, 73; analysis of *Hamlet*, 75; the teachings to be found in Shakespeare's plays, 88; his plays not written with a didactic purpose, 89; his judgment and poetic instinct, 92; his material, 92; the moral reality always present, 93; the character of the man, 94; Chaucer his forerunner and prototype, 324; his verse, 346; **4**, 109; his epithets, **3**, 354; the poet of man as God made him, **4**, 31; Dogberry suggested by Gabriel Harvey, 285 n; passage suggested by Spenser, 307 n; his poetic power not disenchanted by his humor, **6**, 56; his characters, 127; *also*, **1**, 249, 365, 376; **2**, 150, 240, 260; **3**, 282, 301, 334; **4**, 25, 114, 116, 155, 161, 414; **6**, 138, 165, 167.
- compared with Carlyle in truth to nature, **2**, 103; with Milton, **3**, 40; with Æschylus in use of language, 51; with Jonson, 58; with Chaucer in the action of the imagination, 354; with Dante as to subject, **4**, 263.
- on good qualities unappreciated, **1**, 229; on the decline in the quality of servants, **2**, 45; on men's judgments, **3**, 152; on England, **4**, 295.
- Gervinus on, **2**, 163; **3**, 68; Lessing's criticism of, **2**, 222; **3**, 67; Jonsor on, 10 n, 16; Dryden on, 37; his gradual appreciation of, 113; Matthew Arnold on, 37; Coleridge on, 37 n, 68; Farmer on, 46; Châteaubriand on, 63; Goethe on, 63, 66, 87; Hugo on, 63; Voltaire on, 63, 68, 86; **4**, 17; Ulrici on, **3**, 64 n; Schlegel on, 68.
- Antony and Cleopatra*, Lepidus tipsy, **2**, 103; *Hamlet* compared with the Electra, 125; **3**, 49; its effect on an unprejudiced mind imagined, 28; parallel passages in the Andromache, Hippolytus, and Hercules Furens, 50; the cloud-scene with Polonius, 55; Garrick's costume in, 69; the rudeness of manners suggested, 71; historical truth sacrificed to the necessities of the play, 72; the gravediggers' scene, 73; **5**, 241; Hamlet's love for Ophelia, **3**, 74; the characters of Ophelia and Laertes, 75; character of Hamlet analyzed, 74, 76; the character of Horatio, 75, 80; Hamlet's madness, 84; the teaching of the play, 89, 91; typical of a modern quality of mind, 90; the contrasts of character in the play, 91; the ghost, 93; *also*, 58; **6**, 16. *See also*, Hamlet. *Henry VI.*, parallel passage in the *Œdipus Coloneus*, **3**, 50; instance of quibbling quoted from, 54; White on the authorship of 2d part, 54 n; *Julius Cæsar*, a passage criticised by Jonson, 10 n; *Leear*, 39, 58, 124; his sarcasm, 84; Edgar's pretended madness, 84; teaching of the play, 88; *Macbeth*, 39, 40, 58; the touches of description dependent on the feeling of the speaker, 44; Lady Macbeth, 51; **4**, 74; Kemble's costume in, **3**, 70; its teaching, 89; gives the metaphysics of apparitions, 93; *Measure for Measure*, defective in parts, 22; Claudio to be compared with Phères in the *Alcestis*, 50; *Merchant of Venice*, Shylock formerly considered a character of low comedy, **6**, 126; *Merry Wives of Windsor*, 135; *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the verses "I know a bank," etc., **4**, 305 n; *Othello*, **3**, 58; the irony of Iago, 83; the teaching of the play, 89; *Romeo and Juliet*, the

- nurse, 54; *Sonnets*, quotation, 302; *Tempest*, its symbolism traced, 59; its references to himself, 61; *Timon*, the irony of *Timon*, 83; *Troilus and Cressida*, speech of Ulysses to be compared with Jocasta's in the *Phœnisie*, 50; quoted, 4, 238 n, 244.
- Shams, 2, 108; Anglo-Saxon repugnance for, 3, 317.
- Shame attending sin, Webster's lines on, 1, 282.
- Shandy, Walter, 6, 193.
- Shaw, Col., his negro regiment, 2, 291.
- Shays's rebellion, 2, 274; Gen. Pomeroy's attitude toward, 5, 70.
- Sheep and the goats, the only line drawn by Christ, 5, 7.
- Sheep-shearing in Passawampscot, 1, 186.
- Sheffield, Mrs. Deliverance, Hugh Peter's perplexities concerning, 2, 25.
- Shelley, his influence traced on J. G. Percival, 2, 145; compared with Wordsworth, 145; his genius a St. Elmo's fire, 229; on fire, 3, 255; Spenser's influence upon, 4, 352; *also*, 369, 413.
- Shenstone, his verse on taverns, 1, 9.
- Shepard, Thomas, letter to Winthrop on drinking, 2, 42.
- Shepherds, Italian, 1, 144.
- Sherbrooke, Lord, on educating your future rulers, 6, 34; on free schools, 170.
- Sheridan, the *Rivals*, 2, 130; Burke on, 3, 121.
- Sherman's lozenges, 5, 161.
- Shiftness, American, its advantages, 2, 286.
- Ship, Percival's verse compared to a cranky ship, 2, 141.
- Ship on fire within, Puritanism compared to, 1, 78.
- Ship's poor relation, X, the Chief Mate an instance, 1, 117.
- Shipping, American, 6, 187; effect of protection on, 217.
- Shoddy, 3, 222.
- Shooting-stars, 1, 305; and planets, 5, 272.
- Shower-baths, 1, 180.
- Shows at the Harvard Commencement, 1, 79.
- Shrugs, Italian, 1, 143, 165.
- Shylock, 3, 246.
- Siamese twins, 1, 79.
- Sibbald, his *Chronicle of Scottish Poetry*, 4, 269.
- Sibilants, Taylor's use of, 3, 122; Milton's use of, 4, 91, 94.
- Sibyl, Temple of, at Tivoli, 1, 134.
- Sidney, Algernon, 4, 19.
- Sidney, Sir Philip, Mathew Roydon's lines on, applied to Emerson, 1, 349, 360; Wotton on, 3, 189 n; compared with Spenser, 4, 276; his influence on English style, 276; his *Arcadia*, 276, 342; his experiments in metre, 277, 302; on Spenser's language, 301 n; *also*, 1, 356.
- Siegfried, 2, 110.
- Sierra Morena of Don Quixote, 1, 114.
- Siger, Doctor, Dante's allusion to, 4, 124, 172.
- Signboard on Lewis the brewer's handcart, 1, 60.
- Silkworm, a poet compared to, 3, 300.
- Simile and metaphor, 4, 21.
- Similes, to be drawn from the flying-fish, 1, 103; in Chapman's *Homer*, 291; in early English narrative poetry, 3, 327; of Dante, 4, 260. *See also*, *Metaphors*.
- Simonides, 2, 135.
- Simony of *withholding* the gifts of God for a price, 5, 11.
- Simplicity, literary, 2, 82; of *Homer*, 1, 293; distinguished from vulgarity, 4, 276; the crowning result of the highest culture, 300.
- Simpson, Agnes, her confession of witchcraft, 2, 352; the evidence against her, 378.
- Simulacra of Lucian, 2, 322 n.
- Sin, the hatefulness of, 4, 176; Dante on the punishment of, 177; its nature, 251. *See also*, *Evil*.
- Sin and crime identical with Dante, 4, 232 n.
- Sincerity, required in a tourist, 1, 122; the evidence of, 2, 243; demanded of a sentimentalist, 257; necessary for an autobiography, 260; *also*, 4, 18.
- Singularity, the conceit of, 6, 13.
- Singularity in virtue easily believed, 2, 259.
- Sirens, 1, 123; Prof. P. imagined passing their island, 92.
- Sixteenth century rich in famous men, 3, 16.
- Skeat, W. W., editor of Chaucer, 3, 338.
- Skelton, John, Dyce's edition of, 1, 318; character of his verse, 4, 273.
- Sketching near Tivoli, 1, 130.
- Slander, the truth in, 3, 231.
- Slave Power, its danger to the Union foreseen by Quincy, 2, 303.
- Slave trade, extension of, procured by South Carolina and Georgia, 5, 140.
- Slaves, Em. Downing advocates the introduction of, into New England, 2, 42; excluded from the operation of Providence by the Amer. Tract Soc., 5, 7; the sympathy with fugitive slaves at the North, 29; to be regarded as men under the Constitution and on Southern evidence, 29; in the Roman army, 127.

- Slavery, Marston's lines on, **1**, 268; in New England: John Winthrop's negro, **2**, 70; the attitude of the American Tract Society toward, **5**, 2; its discussion not feared in the South before 1831, 4; moral duties connected with, proper subjects of discussion, 6; compromise a fatal word with respect to, 8; the inconsistency of Christians in condoning, 11; antiquity no valid plea for, 13; has no claim to immunity from discussion, 13, 31, 140; its abuses to be rooted out even if the institution were righteous, 14; essentially a moral, and not a political question, 14; the question forced upon us by the spirit of Christianity, 15; its influence upon American politics, 20, 42, 142; its degrading effect on the non-slaveholding states, 21, 144; additional privileges demanded for an already privileged property, 28; its discussion dangerous to the slaveholders, not to the Union, 31; its blighting effect on the South, 32, 222, 224, 252; position of the Republican party with regard to, 35, 42; its presence in the Territories keeps out free white settlers, 39; laws to protect it in the Territories demanded, 40; its encroachments compared to the advance of a glacier, 43; will gradually melt away before the influence of Truth, 44; no longer the question before the country in 1861, 71; its violent abolition sure to follow secession, 71; moderation impossible in combination with, 86; a radical change in, to be expected from the Civil War, 91; its history in America traced in Greeley's *American Conflict*, 139; the ebb of anti-slavery sentiment for sixty years, 140; its rise after the annexation of Texas, 140; early opinions of, in the South, 141; the theory of its divine origin an invention of recent date, 141; profit the motive of all its encroachments, 142; the claim that it was conservative, 144; its abolition seen to be the necessary consequence of the War in 1864, 151; to be attacked as a crime against the nation, 152; McClellan's attitude toward, 166; to be rooted out in order to insure a lasting peace, 175; Lincoln's attitude toward, 197; its abolition forced upon us by circumstances, 197; admitted as a reserved right under the Constitution, 201; proclaimed by the South as the corner-stone of free institutions, 202; the slaveholders the best propagandists of anti-slavery, 204; the South's proposal to arm the slaves in 1865, 219; the main arguments for slavery thereby swept away, 220; its influence on the character of the blacks, 224; its security and extension the original motive of the War, 248, 250; the alleged attachment between master and servant, 319. *See also*, Fugitive Slave Law; Property in slaves; Emancipation.
- Sleep, **3**, 258; in a wongen, after moose-hunting, **1**, 37.
- Sleeping in church, the Amer. Tract Society's tract on, **5**, 6.
- Sleepy hostler described, **1**, 12.
- Small men in Europe and America, the point of view different, **2**, 277.
- Small-pox, Dryden's lines descriptive of, **3**, 108.
- Smibert, the painter, **1**, 75.
- Smith and his Dame* cited, **1**, 341.
- Smith, Adam, **6**, 187.
- Smith, Goldwin, **3**, 240.
- Smith, Capt. John, **2**, 68.
- Smith, Gen. Kirby, on the possibility of destroying the Southern army the first winter, **5**, 110.
- Smith, Sydney, his question, Who reads an American book? **2**, 149; on taking short views of life, **6**, 215.
- Smoke, seen in winter, **3**, 286; Thoreau's lines on, 286.
- Smoking at sea, **1**, 101.
- Smollett, copied Cervantes, **6**, 136; Lessing on his *Roderick Random*, **2**, 197.
- Snow brothers, oyster men in Cambridge, **1**, 66; anticipatory elegy on, 67; on Commencement days, 80.
- Snow, the silence of, **3**, 222; Goethe on, 267; poets' references to, 275; the wind's action on, 277; the footprints of animals on, 277; the quietly falling, 278; its beautiful curves, 279; building and moulding in, 281; its colors, 283; in city streets, 284.
- Snow-crusts, **3**, 284.
- Snow fights, **3**, 282.
- Snow forts, **3**, 282.
- Snow-storm, Homer's picture of, **3**, 274; walk in, 274; the silence and purity of the next morning, 276.
- Snuff-box, Dr. Waterhouse's advertisement for, **1**, 96.
- Socialism, confuted by Spenser, **4**, 350; dangerous to the existing order of things, **6**, 34; its beneficent possibilities, 35; fatal to certain home-spun virtues, 171.
- Society, value of, **1**, 15; **6**, 168; its code of manners, **4**, 11. *See also*, Good society.
- Society, its constitution, etc., Dante's views of, **4**, 151; its periodic ebbs and floods, 265; the chief end of man formerly and now, **6**, 14; men

- beginning to know their opportunity and their power, 15; social upheaval the result of neglected duties, 16; the disquiet caused by "growing-pains," 17; changes never welcomed, 18; ages of transition, 19; the mastery of new social forces, 19; instinct to admire what is better than one's self the tap-root of civilization, 32; state socialism disastrous, 35; the germs of its evils to be discovered and extirpated, 36; violent changes not to be expected, 36; its strong constitution shown by the quack medicines it has survived, 37; Wordsworth's early belief in the gregarious regeneration of man, 102; the necessity of individual improvement of personal character, 103; the Don Quixotes of, 121; the doctrinaire reformers of, 123; the facts of life bound up with other facts of the present and the past, 124; Don Quixote's struggles against, without result, 124; the motto "Do right though the heavens fall," 124; its recognized authoritative guides, 159; the influence of the few, 178; necessity of cultivating the things of the mind, 227. *See also*, Civilization; Life; Progress; Culture; Politics; Crime.
- Socrates, 2, 104; his grave irony, 3, 83.
- Sohrab and Rustem, 3, 311.
- Soil, its formation, 3, 300; language compared to, 312.
- Soldiers, literary men who have been, 2, 286. *See also*, American soldiers.
- Solidity and lightness as elements of character, 5, 245.
- Solitude, the supremest sense of, given by full daylight, 1, 105; Cowley on, 373; felt in Rome, 192; needed for the imagination, 3, 132; verses on, in Dodsley's Collection, 223; *also*, 2, 376; 4, 360.
- Sonnet, 4, 402; Wordsworth's use of, 6, 112.
- Sophocles, 2, 138; *Ajax*, his quibbles, 3, 54; *Antigone*, 4, 232; the first example of character-painting, 3, 57; *Electra*, parallel passage in Hamlet, 49; *Œdipus Coloneus*, parallel passage in King Henry VI., 50.
- Soracte, Island of, 1, 145.
- Soul, conceived of as a piece of property, 2, 329; Dante on its relation to God, 4, 188. *See also*, Human nature; Man.
- Soup, the Irishman's kettle of, 5, 283.
- South, the. *See* United States.
- Southampton, L. I., Declaration in 1673, 2, 61.
- South Carolina, the long-windedness and short-meaningness of her politicians, 5, 50; the secession proceedings, 56; her politicians adroit managers, but not business men, 58; her prosperity dependent on cotton alone, 58; the difficulty of meeting her financial obligations in case of war, 59; opens the War by the attack on Fort Sumter, 72; undervalues the people of the Free States, 73; slavery abhorred by the best men of, in 1786, 141; at the Philadelphia convention of 1866, 285.
- Southey, view of religion, 3, 187; his correspondence, 4, 50; his communistic dreams, 373 n; occasional coarseness of his "Doctor," 6, 60; anecdote of an old woman's remark on the weather, 85.
- on domestic servants, 2, 46; on pure English, 4, 277 n; on Wordsworth, 390 n.
- Southwell, reprinted in the "Library of Old Authors," 1, 253; his bad verse, 253; poor style of the editor, 255; ultramontanism and credulity of the editor, 257.
- Spain, first glimpse of, from the sea, 1, 114.
- Spalding, Capt., his sight of the sea-serpent, 1, 108.
- Spanish American republics, their great man ignored by us, 2, 283.
- Spanish drama, 2, 131; 6, 116; the Fate element in, 3, 57.
- Spanish literature, its national character, 6, 116.
- Spanish romances, 6, 116.
- Sparrow on the house-top, his life, 2, 192, 198, 205.
- Spartacus, 5, 126.
- Spasmodic school of poets, 1, 280.
- Specialization in education, 6, 176.
- Specimen ruin wanted by a Michigan man, 1, 212.
- Spectacles of the heroic period, 1, 91, 96.
- Speculation, Dante on, 4, 167, 186, 204.
- Spedding cited, 3, 22.
- Spelling, vagaries of, 2, 61, 63; Milton's, Masson's discussion of, 4, 89.
- Spendthrift heirs, 1, 250.
- SPENSER, 4, 265-353; the condition of English poetry between Chaucer and Spenser, 265; his contemporaries, 276; his influence on the transformation of English literature, 283; birth and family, 284; education and early life, 285; residence in Ireland, 286; visit to London in 1589, 287; is shocked by the life of the Court, 288; familiar with Dante, 146, 290 n, 332 n; his own success at Court, 290; his allusions to Burleigh, 291; visit to England in 1595 and advancement by the Queen, 296; his chil-

- dren, 296 n; his death, 297; his poverty and misfortunes exaggerated, 297 n; his personal character, 298, 337; his originality, 299; turned to Chaucer as his master, 301; his skill in versification, 302, 305 n, 310, 328; his sense of harmony, 303; his conception of poetry and the poet's office, 306; his diction, 308, 334; **3**, 8; his learning, **4**, 309; his function "to reign in the air," 313; probably a Puritan, 314; tended to a Platonic mysticism, 315; his purity without coldness, 316, 352; his study of French sources, 316 n; all his senses keenly alive, 317, 326, 336, 343; lacking in sense of humor, 319; his style Venetian, 326; his splendid superfluity, 328; shown in his measurement of time, 330; his dilatation the expansion of natural growth, 331; his verse produces a condition of revery, 334, 349, 353; his world purely imaginary and unreal, 335, 348; delight in the beauty of nature, 338; his innovations in language, 347; his alliterations, 347; a solid basis of good sense, 350; an Englishman to his inmost fibre, 350; his disciples, 351; Keats's poetic faculty developed by reading, **1**, 223, 243; language, **3**, 12 n; reinvented the art of writing well, 36; his verse, 345, 350; **4**, 108; his view of nature, **3**, 355; his allegory, 362; lines on the Rosalind who had rejected him, **4**, 51; Milton's obligations to, 302, 305 n, 333; *also*, **3**, 16, 189, 336, 337; **4**, 25, 97, 114.
- compared with Sidney, **4**, 276; with Ovid in Pontus, 286; with Bunyan as to allegory, 322.
- on Chaucer, **3**, 365; on hexameter verse, **4**, 277; on use of language, 346; on riding, 351; on the world of the imagination, **6**, 94.
- Dryden's opinion of, **3**, 123; **4**, 351; Milton on, 207 n, 314; Lod. Bryskett's account of, 292 n; Sidney on his language, 301 n; Henry More on, 314; Hazlitt on, 321; Lamb on, 326; Hughes on his measure, 329; Warton on his stanza and his circumlocutions, 329; Pope on, 351; Wordsworth on, 351; Landor on, 352.
- Colin Clout*, **4**, 286, 288; — *Daphnida*, 339; — *Epithalamion*, 337; — *Faery Queen* imitates the closing allegory of the Purgatorio, 207 n; its success, 287; inspired by Ariosto, 299, 319 n; the sense of taste in, 317 n; its two objects, 318, 324; its characters the leading personages of the day, 318; Mary Queen of Scots as Duessa, 319 n; the allegory, 319, 321, 326; its merits, 320; its faults as narrative, 321, 323; compared to an illuminated MS., 325; quotations to illustrate the style, 329-335, 340, 344; the sonnets prefixed, 337 n; the character of Una, 339; confutation of socialism, 350; its influence on the world, 351; — *Hymns to Love and Beauty*, 316; — *Mother Hubbard's Tale*, 289, 313, 315 n, 320 n; its date, 290 n; — *Mutability*, 297 n; — *Muiopotmos*, 310, 326 n; — *Prothalamion*, 337; — *Ruins of Time*, 291; — *Shepherd's Calendar*, its publication marks an epoch in English literature, 299; its spirit fresh and original, 300; its style, 302; quoted, 303, 304, 305, 307; — *Tears of the Muses*, 292.
- Spenserian stanza. *See* English prosody.
- Sphinx-riddle, the childish simplicity of its solution, **5**, 199.
- Spinoza, **3**, 355; **4**, 153 n; Coleridge's and Wordsworth's study of, 380; on the strength of laws, **5**, 37.
- Spire, characteristic of New England religious architecture, **1**, 54.
- Spirit of the Age, **6**, 162; Dryden's recognition of, **3**, 102.
- Spiritual eye, the imagination, **2**, 84.
- Spiritualism, **2**, 396, 397; **5**, 120.
- Spontaneousness, **6**, 79.
- Spread-eagle style, **1**, 349.
- Spring, **3**, 258; **6**, 107.
- Squatter sovereignty, **5**, 25, 39.
- Squire of Low Degree*, Hazlitt's and Ritson's editions of, **1**, 331; cited, 341.
- Squirrels, **4**, 267; depredations of the red squirrel, **3**, 219.
- Stage, its morality early defended by Lessing, **2**, 185. *See also*, Acting.
- Stage-coach ride from Waterville to Newport, Maine, **1**, 9; incident of the hot axle, 10. *See also*, Diligence.
- Stahr's *Life of Lessing*. *See* Lessing, Stahr's *Life of*.
- Staminate flowers of literature, **1**, 366.
- Standard histories, **5**, 121.
- Standards, those of our companions easily adopted, **1**, 24.
- STANLEY, DEAN, speech in the chapter-house of Westminster Abbey, Dec. 13, 1881, **6**, 47-50; the character of the mourners at his funeral, 48; the many-sidedness of his sympathies, 48; Americans ready to contribute to his memorial, 49; his pleasantness, 49; the human nature in him, 49.
- Stanton, Secretary, McClellan's unfounded charges on, **5**, 112.
- Stars, **1**, 356; Thoreau's writing com-

- pared to, 370; seen in winter, **3**, 288.
- Stars in the Triennial Catalogue, **1**, 83.
- Starlit night, **1**, 350.
- State rights, **5**, 63; in the light of the framers of the Constitution, 147; Jefferson's theory of, 148; confusion of mind with regard to the doctrine, 201.
- State socialism disastrous to the commonwealth, **6**, 35.
- Statesmanship, a complicated art, **3**, 235; its necessary qualities, **5**, 115, 183; its highest function, 195; the problems and duties of, **6**, 196; illustrated in the writings and speeches of Burke, 197; shown by Senators Fessenden, Trumbull, and Grimes, 198; the duty to study tendencies and consequences, 216. *See also*, Government; Politics.
- Statesmen, **2**, 302; course of a statesman compared to that of a river, **5**, 196; the waiters on popular providence humorously so called, **6**, 186.
- Statesmen and politicians, **4**, 179.
- Statistics do not appeal to the Muses, **2**, 276. *See also*, Figures.
- Statius read to the Earl of Orford when drunk, **2**, 129.
- Statues, naked, not inappropriate out of doors in Rome, **1**, 215.
- Steam, **1**, 26; its influence on education, 7; fatal to the romance of the sea, 101.
- Stedman, champion of the county, **1**, 65.
- Steele, Sir Richard, on politicians, **3**, 284; his compliment to his wife, **4**, 49; his loyalty to Addison, 53.
- Steevens, George, cited, **3**, 22.
- Stephen, Leslie, **3**, 243.
- Stephens, Alex. H., arguments for slavery, **5**, 220; on the cause of secession, 248 n.
- Sterne, **1**, 364; **2**, 88, 266, 325; *Tristram Shandy*, 88; his humor, **1**, 278; **2**, 170; influenced by Cervantes, **6**, 135.
- Sternhold, **3**, 175.
- Sternhold and Hopkins quoted, **4**, 274.
- Stevens, Thaddeus, of Pennsylvania, **5**, 265, 305.
- Stevenson, Marmaduke, the Quaker, **2**, 66.
- Steward, the Chief Mate's jokes in regard to, **1**, 118.
- Stilts, Shelley and Wordsworth on, **2**, 145; Percival's appearance on, 146.
- Stimulants, use of, Carlyle's increasing extravagance compared to, **2**, 95.
- Stoicism, genial, advantages of, **1**, 46.
- Stolberg, Anguste, Goethe's letters to, **2**, 251.
- Stomach, the, its country-cousinship to the brain, **3**, 119 n.
- Storg, Edelmann (W. W. Story), Moosehead journal addressed to, **1**, 1; memoir on Cambridge thirty years ago addressed to, 43; the author's early life in company with, 52; journey in Italy in company with, 128; not fond of walking, 130.
- Storms charged to America, **6**, 12.
- Story, W. W., **6**, 151. *See also*, Storg.
- Stoughton, on the planting of New England, **6**, 146 n.
- Stoves, **3**, 286.
- Strafford, Masson's description of the death of, **4**, 73.
- Stratford de Redcliffe, Lord, **6**, 39.
- Strauss, some Italians familiar with, **1**, 156.
- Strawberries, Thoreau's works compared to the various kinds of, **1**, 368.
- Street-cries in Rome, **1**, 152.
- Stuart, character of his painting, **1**, 76.
- Stubbs, John, **2**, 65.
- Study, without application, mere gymnastics, **1**, 20.
- Style, **3**, 31, 35, 37, 353; **4**, 21; of small importance to the young, 26; clearness and terseness essentials of, 54; the importance of knowing what to leave in the inkstand, 79; its power in historical composition, **5**, 120; the practice of translation a help toward, **6**, 93. *See also*, Abundance; Alliteration; Artifice; Assonance; Bourgeois; Choice of words; Composition; Conceits; Correctness; Decorum; Description; Diction; Elegancy; Eloquence; Epithets; Execution; Expression; Force; Form; Images; Individualism; Indirectness; Metaphors; Naturalness; Personification; Similes; Simplicity; Suggestion; Superlatives; Unconventionality; Unexpectedness; Vividness.
- of Emerson, **1**, 367; of Thoreau, 370; of Shakespeare, **3**, 36; of Daniel, **4**, 282.
- Styles, Elizabeth, her confession of dealings with the Devil, **2**, 338.
- Stylites, the oldest surviving graduate compared to, **1**, 83.
- Subiaco, the road to, **1**, 130, 152; seen from a distance at night, 181; arrival at the inn, and supper, 182; the scenery about, 182; convent of San Benedetto, 183.
- Sublimity, in mountains, how felt, **1**, 41; Dryden on, **3**, 189 n; audacity of self-reliance an important part of, **4**, 116.
- Subscription for repairing a convent demanded by a friar, **1**, 209.

- Success, **2**, 17; its requisites, 79; the popular ideal of, **6**, 173; the true measure of a nation's success, 174.
- Suffering, enjoyed by the sentimentalist, **2**, 250; its moral effect, **5**, 222.
- Suffrage, property qualification abolished in Massachusetts, **6**, 10.
- Suffrage, negro. *See* Negro suffrage.
- Suffrage, universal, its advantages and objections, **5**, 232; its failure in large cities, **6**, 11; its practical working, 28; danger of denying it, 29; develops the prudence and discretion of the people, 30.
- Sufis, their teaching on the three steps to perfection, **4**, 253.
- Suggestion, more important than cumulation, **3**, 42; value of, in literature, 171.
- Suicide, Châteaubriand's attempts at, **2**, 160; Percival's attempt at, 160; Lessing's thoughts of, 209; Dryden's lines on, **3**, 141 n; Waller's lines on, **4**, 23.
- Suicide by proxy, **2**, 251.
- Summer, **3**, 258.
- Sumter, Fort, rumors of its intended bombardment, **5**, 62.
- Sun, alone with him at sea or on a mountain top, **1**, 105.
- Sunfish harpooned at sea, **1**, 102.
- Sunflowers, **1**, 59.
- Sunrise, at sea, **1**, 106; verses on, 106.
- Sunset, on the Penobscot, **1**, 33; near Tivoli, 144, 184; at Palestrina, 159; original every evening, 242.
- Sunset of life, **2**, 305.
- Sunshine in Italy, **1**, 215.
- Superfluous, Voltaire on, **1**, 204.
- Superlatives in Milton, **4**, 95.
- Supernatural, origin of the belief in, **2**, 320.
- Supernatural and natural, a vast border-land between them, **2**, 373.
- Superstition, Roman Catholicism in Italy only a, **1**, 155; the æsthetic variety of, **2**, 317; its etymological meaning, 326; its growth from myth, 359; regarded as of one substance with faith, 385; caused by materialism, 397; modern superstition the Jacobitism of sentiment, 317; decay of, **6**, 31.
- Superstitions often the relics of religious beliefs, **2**, 326.
- Supper at the inn, in Subiaco, **1**, 182.
- Surrey, **4**, 274, 302; his *Æneid*, **3**, 137 n.
- Swearing, of the Italian guide, **1**, 173; its evangelists, 362.
- Swedenborg, **4**, 252; some Italians familiar with, **1**, 156.
- Sweetheart, appreciation of, by other people, **3**, 232.
- Swift, his humor reappears in Carlyle, **2**, 88; his cynicism the result of personal disappointment, 97; hatred of the triplet, **3**, 97; use of images criticised, 124; his style, 130; his filthy cynicism, 153; his view of religion, **4**, 18; affected indifference to the world in his correspondence, 28; correspondence with Pope, 50; his influence on Pope, 57; compared with Fielding, **6**, 66; influenced by Cervantes, 135; *also*, **2**, 170.
- on the influence of women in refining language, **3**, 131; on Dryden, 132 n; on his prefaces, 134; on Roman noses, 271.
- Dryden on, **3**, 132 n.
- SWINBURNE'S TRAGEDIES, **2**, 120-139; his power of assimilating style, 126; his *Chastelard*, its character, 122; belongs to the physically intense school, 122; his *Atalanta in Calydon*, its verse, 123; its lack of reality, 124; its profusion of imagery, 126; its Greek theme and manner, 126; essay on Wordsworth, **6**, 100.
- Switzerland, democracy in, **6**, 21.
- Sword, the gift of Christ, **5**, 10.
- Sylvester II., Pope, charged with having made a compact with Satan, **2**, 331.
- Sylvester's *Du Bartas*, Dryden's opinion of, **3**, 123; Wordsworth on, **4**, 351.
- Symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*, **4**, 158.
- Symmachus, **2**, 322.
- Symonds' Hill, Cambridge, **1**, 54.
- Sympathetic powder, Sir K. Digby's, **2**, 56.
- Sympathy, of kindred pursuits, **1**, 118; fostered by simple village life, **4**, 360; increased by individualization, **5**, 242; between England and America, **6**, 50.
- Syntax, Dr., **2**, 109.
- T. G. A. = Thomas Gold Appleton.
- T. H. = Thomas Hughes.
- Tacitus, the Agricola compared with Maidstone's account of Cromwell, **2**, 37; a phrase of Milton's borrowed from, **4**, 85; *also*, 150, 301; **5**, 120.
- Taine, his History of English literature, **5**, 124.
- Talent, compared with genius, **1**, 84; character valued more highly than, **2**, 257. *See also*, Genius.
- Talleyrand, want of respect for, **2**, 312.
- Tannhäuser, **1**, 107; its allegory, **2**, 138.
- Tariff, Pres. Cleveland's message on, **6**, 186, 216; reduction of the tariff demanded, 216.

- TARIFF REFORM: address Dec. 29, 1887, 6, 181-189.
- Tasso, 3, 16; his definite comparisons, 4, 100; his work saved by its diction, 6, 64.
- Taste, 3, 125; the Anglo-Saxon want of confidence in matters of, 4, 13; must not exceed its rightful province, 21; controversies of, 26; sense of, in the *Faery Queen*, 317 n.
- Taurus, constellation presides over bulls and blunders, 1, 262.
- Taverns, in Maine, 1, 9; Shenstone's verse on, 9; at Greenville, 12; in Kineo, kept by Squire Barrows, 18; their carnal attractions bewailed by Cotton Mather, 78; in Passawampscot, 187; kept by persons who have not the genius, 2, 71. *See also*, Inns.
- Taverner, the ghost of James Haddock appears to, 2, 322.
- Taxation in Austria in 1546, 6, 14 n.
- Taylor, Bayard, quoted, 5, 207.
- Taylor, Jeremy, his long sentences, 1, 217; one of Keats's last pleasures, 239; his style, 3, 121; *also*, 3; 4, 325 n.
- Taylor, John, the water poet, his language, 3, 12 n.
- Taylor, Thomas, the Platonist, 6, 145.
- Teachers, rarity of great teachers, 6, 149.
- Teaching, the aims of, 6, 158; its tendency to decline, 171.
- Teaching language, Roger Williams's method, 2, 32.
- Tears, genuine and assumed, 2, 251.
- Tediousness, 2, 156.
- Tehmine, lament of, 3, 311.
- Teiresias, 4, 115.
- Telegraph, its insidious treachery in multiplying rumors, 5, 180; its impartial brevity and cynicism, 239; its effect on the national thought and character, 243; 6, 175; makes the whole nation one great town meeting, 5, 244; its effect in a democracy, 6, 23 n; the common nervous system of the world, 42.
- Temperance question, in early New England, Thomas Shepard on, 2, 41; attitude of the Amer. Tract Soc. toward, 5, 5.
- Temptation, Rousseau on the avoidance of, 2, 249.
- Teniers, passage in Spenser compared to, 4, 309.
- Ten-minute speeches, 6, 222.
- Tennyson, character of his verse, 2, 121; his *Idylls of the King*, 132; quoted by a Mississippi boatman, 3, 209; his knights unreal persons, 5, 242; *also*, 4, 369.
- Tenure of office, in Cambridge, in old times, 1, 59; the four-year term compared to a nail-cutting machine, 59.
- Terni, falls of, Byron on, 1, 129.
- Terry, abuse of Keats in Blackwood, 1, 226.
- Testament, Davenport's "right-aim," 1, 72.
- Teutonic poetry before Dante, 4, 228.
- Texas, settlers from Free States driven out from, 5, 39.
- annexation of, consequent rise of the anti-slavery spirit, 5, 140; encroachments of slavery after, 142.
- Thackeray, W. M., at sea, 1, 102; sentiment of, 2, 252; as an historian, 5, 121; on the hands and feet of the Americans, 310; on Fielding, 6, 63; *also*, 2, 117; 3, 357.
- Thales, 2, 168.
- Theatre. *See* Acting; Drama; Stage.
- Theatrical scenery compared to short-lived literary fame, 2, 77.
- Theleme, Abbey of, 1, 88.
- Theobald, Pope on, 4, 52.
- Theocritus, 2, 128, 136; 6, 174; Dryden on, 3, 180.
- Theodoric troubled by the death of Symmachus, 2, 322.
- Theological discussion, lack of interest in, on the part of the laity, 2, 217; at Geneva, 245.
- Theology, Lessing's attitude toward, 2, 214; Dante on, 4, 201.
- Theophilus of Adana, 2, 329.
- Theory and practice divorced by the sentimentalist, 2, 249, 250.
- Theories and facts, 2, 75.
- Thermometers, 3, 196.
- Thiers, 6, 208.
- Thinking, an occupation generally dreaded, 1, 21; the highest result of education, 6, 89.
- Thomson, the first descriptive poet, 3, 262; his poetical creed, 4, 3; his *Winter* a protest against the literature of Good Society, 3; his style compared with Milton's, 86; a follower of Spenser, 352; *also*, 3, 98; 4, 6.
- on winter, 3, 266.
- Lessing on, 2, 196.
- Thor, traditions of, transferred to the Devil, 2, 348.
- THOREAU, 1, 361-381; his posthumous works, edited by Emerson, compared to strawberries, 368; his high conceit of himself, 369; his lack of the faculty of generalization and of active imagination, 369; his critical power limited, 369; his style, 370; less poet than naturalist, 370; his discoveries, 370; his freshness of treatment, 371; his isolation and exclusiveness, 371; his itch of originality, 371, 373; his paradoxes compared to Dr. Winship's dumb-bells,

- 372; his extravagance of statement, 372; the limitations imposed by his withdrawal from the world, 373; his lack of humor, 374; his egotism, 374; his character not sweetened by communion with Nature, 377; the quality of his mind, 378; monotony of his writings, 378; his writing incomparable at its best, 379; the ideal element, 379; his independency of mankind practically impossible, 380; his aim, 380; his style, 380; lines on smoke from a wood-cutter's cabin, 3, 286; on the "whoop" of the freezing lake, 290.
- Thought, influenced by the material it works in, 6, 87. *See also*, Thinking.
- Thunder, Milton's more elaborate passages compared to, 4, 101.
- Thunder-storms, J. F.'s enjoyment of, 1, 91.
- Ticknor, George, his kindness to young scholars, 2, 160; his lectures on Dante, 4, 147.
- Tide in the affairs of men, 2, 8.
- Tieck, 2, 130; on Kemble in Macbeth, 3, 70.
- Tiedge, 2, 146.
- Tillotson, Lessing's father the translator of, 2, 181; Dryden's style formed after, 3, 185.
- Time, the Roman and the Anglo-Saxon treatment of, 1, 131; measured by the great clock of the firmament, 4, 330; lines of Spenser referring to, 331; God alone has enough, 5, 188; *also*, 4, 408.
- Timon of Athens. *See* Shakespeare.
- Tinker, John, steward of Winthrop, his use of the word *help* quoted, 2, 44; extracts from his letters, 70; desired to keep an ordinary or tavern, 71.
- Tithonus, 2, 79.
- Titian's Assumption, the cherubs of, 1, 355.
- Titles, the republican ear soon reconciled to, 1, 135.
- Titmouse, Emerson's, 3, 200.
- Tito, at Tivoli, 1, 136.
- Tivoli, visit to, 1, 128; source of the Roman lime supply, 150; drive to, from Subiaco, 184.
- Tobacco, 2, 58.
- Tobacco chewing, 1, 69.
- Toby, Uncle, 5, 107.
- Toepffer, his poet, Alberto, who tried to look like his portrait, 4, 409; 5, 98.
- Toledo, the Devil's school of magic in, 2, 368.
- Toleration, 2, 18; 6, 48; difficulty of obtaining a perfect conception of, 2, 67; Coleridge on, 216.
- Toll, paying, 1, 84.
- Tombola, or lottery, 1, 156.
- Tombs, John, Anabaptist writer, 2, 39.
- Tooke, Horne, on Dryden, 3, 180; on his *Don Sebastian*, 173; etymology of *highth*, 4, 93.
- Toombs, Robert, 5, 66.
- Tories of Cambridge, 1, 54, 94.
- Torneo, 1, 145.
- Tortoise, Gilbert White's observations on, 3, 194.
- Torture of witches described by Bodin, 2, 379.
- Toryism of Scott and Carlyle distinguished, 2, 109.
- Torzelo, Cambridgeport marshes compared to, 1, 72.
- Toucy, 5, 78.
- Town meetings, 5, 244; as a means of training in citizenship, 6, 208.
- Tracts confused with actions of trover by the Amer. Tract Soc., 5, 8.
- Trade distinguished from commerce, 2, 290.
- Trade unions, 6, 18.
- Trade wind, the movement of Milton's verse compared to, 4, 402.
- Tradition, the one thing better than, 1, 364; its value in politics, 6, 22.
- Traditions, their power, 2, 112; the preciousness of, 3, 223.
- Tragedy, English, French, and Spanish, 2, 131. *See also*, Drama.
- Training, 3, 250.
- Training-days, Harvard Washington Corps on, 1, 88; fight with the college students, 92.
- Transcendental, the abuse of the term, 1, 363.
- Transcendental movement, 1, 354; its humors, 361; its solid and serious kernel, 363; simply a struggle for fresh air and *life*, 364; its radical difference from the doctrine of Carlyle, 367.
- Transformation of men into animals, instances of the belief in, 2, 360.
- Translation, the aroma of the original necessarily lost, 1, 289; an adequate impression of force and originality demanded, 289; recent discussions on translating Homer, 291; liberties allowed a translator, 294; Coleridge's excellence in, 6, 72; the practice of, favorable to a good English style, 93; its value as a means of discipline, 166; *also*, 3, 42; 6, 108.
- Chapman on, 1, 288, 290; Lieberkühn's theory of, 2, 179; Dryden on, 3, 181; Dante and Cervantes on, 4, 218.
- Translations, Dryden's, 3, 114; value of, 6, 92.
- Transubstantiation, 4, 256; a slave-dealer's view of, 6, 2.

- Travel, how one is thrown upon one's own resources, **1**, 19; best time of life for, **43**; a cure for self-importance, **45**; familiarity with one's own village, at least, a prerequisite, **45**; the mental and spiritual outfit for, commonly unheeded, **45**; delicate senses and the fine eye of imagination necessary, **46**; its object to know *things*, not *men*, **47**; verses on travel at home, **47**; mere sights need not be visited, **48**; its object to discover one's self, **49**; folly of visiting Europe if self-absorbed, **49**; the wise man stays at home, **50**; necessary for the study of æsthetics, but not of history, **53**; opinion of Jonathan Wild's father on, **120**; Montaigne's and Ulysses's objects, **122**; books of travel, **6**, 94.
- Travellers, their stories no longer proverbial, **1**, 109; modern travellers too sceptical and scientific, **109**; no longer endowed with imagination, **110**; mistaken aims of most, **120**; their want of sincerity, **122**; on what the value of their journals depends, **127**; beset by guides, as oysters are by crabs, **134**.
- Treason, American notions of, **5**, 255.
- Tree of knowledge, its apples now nearly all plucked, **1**, 109.
- Trees, of Cambridge, **1**, 54; their anatomy seen in winter, **3**, 286; the associations of, called up by the imagination, **4**, 397.
- Trent, Council of, **2**, 22.
- Trial, the sources of strength in, **5**, 130.
- Triennial Catalogue of Harvard College, **1**, 82.
- Tristan* of Godfrey of Strasburg cited, **1**, 341.
- Trithemius on the demon-cook of the Bishop of Hildesheim, **2**, 366.
- Triumph, Roman, **1**, 144.
- Troubadours, **3**, 302; compared with the Trouvères, **312**; love of nature, **355**. *See also*, Provençal poetry.
- Trouvères, **3**, 64; **4**, 266; **5**, 242; freshness and vigor of their poetry, **3**, 309; its disproportion and want of art, **310**; compared with the Troubadours, **312**; acquired an ease and grace in narrative, **313**.
- Trumbull, John, the painter, **1**, 76.
- Trumbull, Dr. Hammond, **6**, 149.
- Trumbull, Senator Lyman, **6**, 198.
- Truth, sacredness of, **2**, 108; Carlyle's passion for, **113**; Lessing's passion for, **198**; one for the world, another for the conscience, **269**; purity in language dependent on veracity of thought, **270**; its form and position variable in different generations, **371**; in works of art, **3**, 71; of science and of morals compared, **4**, 255; not to be followed too near the heels, **319 n**; **6**, 62; courts discussion, **5**, 13; its benignant influence, **44**; loyalty to, **327**; why she is said to lie at the bottom of a well, **6**, 28; the difficulty in finding and interpreting, **158**; its personal application, **194**. *See also*, Fact.
- Lessing on searching for, **2**, 230; Chaucer on, **3**, 296; Langland on, **333**; Dante on the pursuit of, **4**, 202.
- Truth to Nature, **3**, 55; how reached, **2**, 128.
- Tumbling, political, **5**, 295.
- Tupelo tree, **1**, 70.
- Tupper, M. F., **1**, 254; **3**, 257, 330; **5**, 118.
- Turell, Mr., of Medford, exposed a case of pretended witchcraft, **2**, 11; account of a case of pretended possession in Littleton in 1720, **391**.
- Turenne compared with Frederick the Great, **2**, 114.
- Turgot on simplicity, **1**, 375.
- Turnbull, W. B., editor of Southwell's poems, his poor English, **1**, 255; his ultramontaniam and credulity, **257**.
- Turner, Colonel, **2**, 24.
- Turner, J. M. W., Wordsworth's descriptive poetry likened to, **4**, 372; his remark to a lady who did not appreciate his pictures, **6**, 123.
- Turnips, **1**, 60.
- Turtle-dove, **3**, 214.
- Tusser, his lines on his early education, **2**, 298.
- Twaddle in ancient times, **1**, 100.
- Tweed, **4**, 178.
- Twilight, in St. Peter's, Rome, **1**, 201; its charm described, **3**, 220.
- Twin-brothers Snow, elegy upon, **1**, 67.
- Tyler, John, Pres., **5**, 291; his lack of popularity, **296**.
- Tylor on the origin of the supernatural, **2**, 320.
- Types, **3**, 314.
- Typographical errors. *See* Misprints.
- Tyranny of a democracy, the old fallacy of, **5**, 301.
- Tyrwhitt, editor of Chaucer, **3**, 343.
- Ulloa on the conversion of the Mexicans by the Spaniards, **3**, 361.
- Ulrici on Shakespeare, **3**, 64 n.
- Ulysses, wreck of, **1**, 107; his objects in travel, **122**; the type of long-headedness, **2**, 128; of Shakespeare, Dante, and Tennyson, **3**, 71; of Shakespeare, **92**.
- Unaccountable gifts ascribed to improbable causes, **1**, 32.
- Unattained, the, its beauty illustrated, **1**, 26.

Unbelief. *See* Scepticism.

Uncle Zeb, 1, 16; his conversational powers, 17; his opinions on water, 25, 27; his theory concerning salt pork, 27; his frequent potatoes, and difficulties with his load, 29.

Unconventionality essential to poetry, 4, 22. *See also*, Naturalness.

Underhill, Captain, his character, 2, 57; his theological heresies, 58; his public confession in Boston, 59; extracts from his correspondence, 59; beseeches Dudley and Winthrop to use him with Christian plainness, 61; defends himself from aspersion, 62; example of his grandiloquent style, 63.

Understanding strong in the Saxon character, 3, 318.

Undine. *See* Fouqué.

Unexpectedness a source of pleasure in reading, 2, 83.

Unicorn, 1, 112.

Uniformity, of the present age, 1, 39; of ordinary minds, 4, 379.

Unitarianism in England, 6, 19.

United States, the preciousness of the nation seen in the light of the heroes of the War, 3, 221; its material greatness, 234; the change from the conditions of the Revolutionary period, 240; the changes brought about by the war, 249; relations with England in 1869, 252; immigration into, 6, 25; the material prosperity of our early history, 201; the Fourth of July period, 202; the true birthday of the nation, 223. *See also*, America; American Civil War; American Colonies; American politics; Congress; Declaration of Independence.

in 1805-13, 2, 301.

in 1860, 5, 17-44; the election awaited with composure, 17; its political significance, 21, 22, 34, 39; Cotton proclaimed King by Mr. Hammond, 22; the interpretation of certain points of the Constitution the question at issue, 23; all four tickets profess equal loyalty to it, 23; the principles of the Democratic candidates, Breckinridge and Douglas, 24; the *aliases* of the pro-slavery party, 24; the Bell and Everett ticket, 25; its prime object defined by Gov. Hunt, 27; two parties, a Destructive and a Conservative, in the field, 27; the latter as little likely to abolish human nature as Lincoln to abolish slavery, 30; the rights and institutions of the North also sacred, 30; the multiplication of slave communities the question at issue, 34; the position of the Republican party, 35; the excitement

of the time a healthy sign, 36; a question involving the primal principles of government to be decided, 37; the domestic relations of the states not to be interfered with, 37; decided opinions on the subject of slavery discouraged, 38; the fate of the Territories to be determined, 39; the threat of secession not likely to be carried out, 41; the demand of the Free States, 42.

in 1861: the inadequacy of the last months of Buchanan's administration, 5, 45, 179, 248; the credit of the nation shaken, 45; the significance of the crisis, 46; the question of secession, 48; threats of, had not been generally believed, 51; rapid growth of a united public sentiment, 52; the extent of coercion called for, 55, 68, 73; necessity for prompt action, 56, 67, 86; the time for concession past, 57, 64, 86; the demands of the South for special protection of its slave property, 57; the absurd rumors of the day, 62; the army and navy loyal, 62; the prevalent confusion of ideas in regard to state rights, 63; the duty of the hour, 64; interference with the South in its domestic concerns not intended, 65; the Union to be preserved at any cost, 65; civil war to be avoided by prompt action, 67; the antipathy between the North and the South exaggerated, 67; the loyal minority in the Slave States to be supported, 68; the hesitating policy of the government, 69, 75; the President's correspondence with rebel commissioners, 69; the Border States being influenced by Southern emissaries, 70; not slavery, but the reestablishment of order, the question in hand, 71, 84; South Carolina begins the war, 72; the duty of exerting the power of the government, 73.

disunion for a time supposed to be inevitable, 5, 75; the North staggered for a moment by the claim to a *right* of secession, 76, 85; a Convention of Notables called, 76; compromises freely proposed, 76, 166; time thus gained by the Secessionists, 77, 85, 86; the position of the Border States, 77, 82; the need of a leader, 78; the inauguration of Lincoln, 79; the despondency in the North, 79, 178; the secret and dishonest proceedings of the South, 80, 91; Lincoln's inaugural, 81; the administration's lack of confidence, 82, 88; the proposed abandonment of Fort Pickens, 82; conciliatory measures for the Border States, 82; the

disasters of Harper's Ferry and Norfolk, 83; the blunder of discussing slavery and compromise, while the right of secession was the question in hand, 84; the change of policy effected by the November elections, 85; the slave-holders insist on retaining their supremacy, 86; confidence in the national government diminished by delay, 87; the effect on the North of the attack on Fort Sumter, 88; the aroused earnestness of the nation, 89, 186; the great issues at stake, 89, 179; the present energy and determination of the government, 90; the probable effect of the war on slavery, 91; the wheels of government stalled in the Dismal Swamp of constitutional hermeneutics, 100.

the shock received by the sentiments and ideas at the opening of the war, 5, 177; the reaction following the enthusiasm with which the war was begun, 178; the just grounds of apprehension, 179; the effect of European scepticism or hostility on the spirit of the people, 179; the lack of preparation for a great war, 181; the peculiar difficulty of the President's position, 184, 187; the issues of the day founded on moral principles, 185; the difficulty of restricting sentiment to its proper domain, 186; the cry that the war was an abolition crusade, 202; the time opportune for secession, 248; the position of France and England, 249; the thoughtlessness with which the war was entered upon, 251.

in 1862: popular uneasiness at McClellan's delays, 5, 110; the President's policy with regard to emancipation, 197; the demand for a decided policy, 199; the unsettled state of the public mind with regard to slavery and state rights, 200; caution with respect to the proslavery men of the North demanded, 200.

in 1864: McClellan as a candidate for the Presidency, 5, 113; the *manner* of conducting the war not a question for discussion, 114; the kind of statesmanship demanded, 115, 117; the deep purpose of the nation, 116; what does the "Conservative" party intend? 116; the prosecution of the war inevitable, 151, 170; the difficult position of the Democratic party, 153; its candidates, 154, 163; the nomination a political *What-is-it?* 155; the Democratic platform, 157; surrender, their only proposal, 158, 162; the possibilities of a confederacy of

slave and free states, 159; free institutions the real stake of the contest, 159; McClellan's interpretation of the Democratic resolutions, 161; the true value of nationality, territory, and power, 162; peace not to be bought by degradation, 162; the policies of Lincoln and McClellan compared, 164, 168; slavery their only essential point of difference, 166; no time for compromise and conciliation, 166, 168; McClellan's policy of conciliation futile, 170, 176; the complete subjugation of the rebellion necessary, 172; Lincoln reproached by both parties, 173; the two parties directly antagonistic in principle, 174; McClellan's election would be an acknowledgment of the right of secession, 175; the abolition of slavery the only guarantee of future peace, 175.

in 1865: the policy of the country on the establishment of peace, 5, 216; the slave-holding class the only obstacle to peace, 218; the favorable elements in the outlook, 221; our duty to repair, not to punish, 223, 226; the questions brought up by the problem of reconstruction, 223, 300 (*see Reconstruction*); the real objects of the war not to be lost sight of in arranging a peace, 225, 226; forbearance and conciliation necessary, 233; public measures to be founded on judgment and convictions, 234; a latent disaffection at the South to be expected, 235; the financial outlook, 235; a sentimental stage-reconciliation to be guarded against, 237; a permanent policy to be preferred to temporary expedients, 229, 238; the cause of the antipathy to be rooted out, 257; our relation to the Southern States, 258; the South to be compelled to accept democracy, 260; no hasty compromises to be adopted, 263; the opportunity for swift decisive action lost, 269.

in 1866: the attitude of Congress encouraging, 5, 265; the general readiness to propose constitutional amendments, 267; the plan of forming a President's party, 268, 280; the public mind clearly made up on questions of policy, 268; Congress slow in deciding on measures of reconstruction, 269; the application of common sense, not of fine-spun theories, needed, 270; the duty of Congress, 273; the danger of magnifying the President's office, 274; New England demands that America shall be American, 275, 278; supposed speech of Pres. Johnson to a

- Southern delegation, 277; sectionalism to be put aside, 277, 280; the attitude of the American people toward the South, 278; the South not to be admitted to a share in the government till they have given evidence of loyalty, 281; the Philadelphia convention, 283; its central principle the power of the President, 288; its constituents, 288; the President's tour and speeches, 289, 296; its ostensible object discreditable, 290; Mr. Seward's part in it, 292; the President's tour a national scandal and a wrong done to democracy, 295; the crowds that have followed him no index of popularity, 296; the present status of the seceding states, 297; the question of reconstruction, 300; a Union in fact, not merely in form, to be secured, 300; the President's threat to use force against the Congress, 301; Seward's arguments on the status of the Southern States, 302; negro suffrage demanded by the Radical party, 303; immediate suffrage not necessary, 304; the freedom of the parts must not endanger the safety of the whole, 305; absence of revengeful feeling toward the South, 306; the South to be treated kindly, but with firmness, 307; the possibility of future war to be averted, 308, 316, 325; our duty toward the negro, 311, 321, 324; the Americanization of America the stake at issue, 312; the financial outlook, 314; the hesitation of Congress, 314, 322; a bold policy founded on principle advocated, 315; the position of the Republican party, 317; the Rebel States not to be taken back on trust, 319; the terms imposed not harsh, 322; suffrage to be within the reach of all alike, but its conditions not interfered with, 323; the attitude of Congress toward the Executive, 326; faithfulness to the American ideal demanded, 326.
- in 1887: the President's message on the tariff, 6, 184; its effect on political parties, 187; the questions of the War superseded by others of present importance, 188.
- in 1888: the Republican appeal to the passions of the Civil War, 6, 211; the condition of civil service reform, 215; the effects of the protective system, 216; the Treasury surplus, 218.
- Border States*: Southern emissaries early at work in, 5, 70; undertake to maintain a neutrality, 77; the conspirators encouraged by Lincoln's inaugural, 81; their decision more important to themselves than to the North, 82; the mistake in trying to conciliate them, 83, 88; confusion of ideas in, as to rights and duties, 87.
- Constitution*: loyalty to, asserted by all parties, 5, 23; slaves not recognized as property by, 28; to be bent back to its original rectitude, 35; to be construed in favor of freedom, 37; acknowledges no unequalled right of property, 40; the doctrine of secession in the light of, 54, 68; discussions of, at the outbreak of the Rebellion, 100; no perpetual balance of power between free and slave states contemplated, 143; not an anti-slavery document, 145; the question of state rights, 146; idle discussions with regard to, 276; the doctrine of a strict or pettifogging interpretation, 298; the Virginia school of interpretation, 299; the men of the constitutional convention, 6, 206; the idea that the machine will work of itself, 207; Dante's system compared to, 4, 152.
- Government*. See American politics.
- Northern States*: degrading effect of slavery upon, 5, 21; their rights and institutions to be defended as well as those of the South, 30; increase of population, wealth, and intelligence in, 42; their courage and persistence underestimated by the South, 73; the dirt-eaters of the first months of the war, 79; Pollard's picture of the conditions of life in, 133; their uniform concessions to the Slave power, 143, 145; the habit of concession the true cause of the war, 146; their growing determination to resist aggressions, 204; the war entered upon with thoughtless good humor, 251; the theory of the "erring brother" persisted in, 253; the strengthening of purpose and character during the war, 254; absence of revengeful feeling toward the South, 306.
- Southern States and Southerners*: their concessions in slavery matters, 5, 9; rights in slave property not infringed, 28; ill effect of slavery upon their prosperity, 32; unequal distribution of wealth in, 33; the danger of their condition, 33; boastfulness and loquacity of, 50; their consequent hallucinations, 51; their quarrel not with a party, but with the principles of democracy, 57; the financial difficulties of secession, 59; their misconceptions with regard to the North, 61, 136; the instability of a confederacy

which should allow secession, 61; the abolition of state lines proposed, 61; gain time by discussions of compromise, 77; denounce as coercion the exercise of authority by the government, 77; counted on the self-interest of England and the supineness of the North, 78; their sham government and secret proceedings, 80; their open stealing from the general government, 80; conscious of the weakness of their cause, 91; their constitutions intensely democratic, 134; probably only intended a *coup d'état*, and not secession, 135, 159, 203; their social and intellectual superiority in Washington, 136; Greeley on their virtues, 139; expected by the framers of the Constitution to decline in power, 142; their gradually increasing encroachments, 142, 145; their confidence in Northern pusillanimity the cause of the war, 146; the people educated in the belief that secession is their right, 149; the high qualities shown by them in the war, 149; their ideas of the North fundamentally modified, 149; not hopelessly alienated from the North, 151; their condition desperate in 1864, 158; the leaders not afraid of abolitionism, 203; the public spirit called out by the war, 211; the question of their status on returning to the Union, 217; the change in public opinion produced by the war, 219; the proposal to arm the slaves, 219; the South thereby restored to the old position taken by her greatest men, 220; the plan futile as a war measure, 220; shows that the mass of the people are opposed to continuance of war, 221; the spread of Northern ideas, 221; allowances to be made for the evil influence of slavery, 222; the main elements of regeneration to be sought in the South, 222; the effect of slavery on the character of the ruling class, 224, 252; their advantages in war proportionate to their disadvantages in peace, 225; any general confiscation of rebel property unwise, 226; the people must be made landholders, 227; retribution to come upon the rebel leaders from their own sense of folly and sin, 227; the security and extension of slavery the motive for secession, 247, 250; secession expected to be peaceful, 248; enter upon the war in ignorant self-confidence, 251; lose control of their temper, 252; their ferocity in the prosecution of the war, 253; their standards and opinions unchanged by the war,

257; cling to the fragments of their old system, 258; their constitutional position during the war, 276; the attitude of the American people toward, in 1866, 278; their prejudices to be overcome, 282; position in the Philadelphia convention of 1866, 287; status of the seceding states after the war, 297; to be treated with firmness and decision, 307; have learned nothing from the war, 307; to be made to understand something of American ideas, 308; character of their prosperity and civilization before the war, 309; the South to be made to govern itself, 312; necessarily prejudiced in dealing with the freedmen, 319; the terms of admission not harsh, 322; the system of privileged classes to be discontinued, 323; what the term "the South" should mean to us, 324; the memory of their dead justly cherished, 325; the protection and education of both black and white to be provided for, 325; growth of equality in spite of slavery, 6, 204. *See also*, Reconstruction; Slavery.

Territories: their fate to be decided by the election of 1860, 5, 39; the presence of slavery incompatible with the settlement of free whites, 39, 146; laws demanded to protect Southern property in, 40; the North demands freedom for, 42.

The West, political equality in, 6, 204.

Universal suffrage. *See* Suffrage, universal.

University defined, 6, 159; its highest office to distribute the Bread of Life, 159.

Universities of Europe, their antiquity, 6, 142.

University towns, 1, 53; preserve certain humors of character, 89.

Unnaturalness, 1, 375.

Upham, C. W., his *Salem Witchcraft*, 2, 388, 395.

Use detracts from beauty, 1, 202.

Utah, the case of her secession supposed, 5, 54.

Vaccination introduced by Dr. Waterhouse, 1, 96.

Vagrancy, the temptation to, 3, 225.

Valera, Juan, on *Don Quixote*, 6, 122.

Valet de chambre, view of great men, 2, 257.

Vallandigham, Mr., 5, 305; at the Philadelphia convention, 286.

Vampires, 4, 273.

Vanity, 2, 233.

Variety of men, to be found always at home, 1, 47.

Vassalls, of Cambridge, 1, 56.

- Vaughan, Henry, **4**, 21 n; on the rainbow, **3**, 222.
- Velino, falls of the, **1**, 129.
- Venetian art, its spirit in Washington Allston's work, **1**, 77.
- Venetian painting, Spenser's style compared to, **4**, 327.
- Venice, **1**, 33; the domes of St. Mark's, 206; her mercantile achievements, **3**, 233.
- Ventadour, Bernard de, **3**, 303; a passage of Dante traced to, **1**, 316.
- Ventoux, Mont, **3**, 260.
- Venus of Melos, **3**, 41.
- Verde de Vere, **3**, 236.
- Véricour, on Dante a member of the apothecaries' guild, **4**, 128.
- Vernon, Lord, **4**, 227 n.
- Verona, Dante at, **4**, 135, 136.
- Veronese, Paul, a stanza of Spenser's compared to, **4**, 326 n.
- Versailles, **1**, 191.
- Verse. *See* Blank verse; Couplets; English prosody; Poetry.
- Versification, the hop-skip-and-jump theory, **3**, 350. *See also*, English prosody.
- Vespers heard in St. Peter's, Rome, **1**, 201.
- Vesuvius, **1**, 49; to Naples what St. Peter's is to Rome, 151.
- Vetturini, Italian, bargaining with, **1**, 147.
- Vice, personal element in the hatred of, **2**, 236.
- Victoria, Queen, her sympathy on occasion of President Garfield's death, **6**, 39, 41, 50.
- Victory, the love of, **6**, 212.
- View, enjoyed while eating, **1**, 174; from Olevano, 174; from Subiaco, 182.
- Viginere, Blaise, *Des Chiffres*, **2**, 57.
- Vigneul-Marvilliana on literary borrowing, **3**, 143 n.
- Viking fibre in boys' hearts, **1**, 69.
- Vikings, their later representatives, **2**, 290.
- Village life, Cambridge an example of, **1**, 55.
- Village wit, **1**, 58.
- Villages, in Northern Maine, **1**, 9; American, described, 185.
- Villani, Filippo, **4**, 142.
- Villani, Giov., on Brunetto Latini, **4**, 124; sketch of Dante, 138.
- Villiers, George, *Rehearsal*, Dryden on, **3**, 175.
- Virgil, **2**, 80; **3**, 305; **6**, 227; in the Middle Ages, **3**, 302; **4**, 221; Dryden on, **3**, 120, 180; Dante on, **4**, 197 n.
- Æneid*, translation by Gawain Douglas, 271; — *Moretum*, **2**, 135; a peasant kindling his fire, **3**, 287.
- Virginia, compared with Massachusetts in its early institutions, **2**, 15; her position cowardly and selfish in 1861, **5**, 77; honored the speculation of a cabinet officer, 81; joins the Confederacy, 87; on the necessity of coercion in 1787, 147; life of the older families of, 309; devotion and endurance of the people, 325.
- Virginia Convention of 1831, the discussion of slavery not feared by its members, **5**, 4.
- Virtue, in the deed and in the will, not to be separated, **2**, 249; the fugitive and cloistered kind, 249; Dante on the delights of, **4**, 172 n; power of the examples of, in history, **5**, 130.
- Virtue sowing, Webster's lines on, **1**, 281.
- Vischer's *Æsthetik*, **2**, 164.
- Vividness of expression, **3**, 31; **4**, 73; Carlyle unexcelled in, **2**, 101.
- Voice, powerful, its use, **5**, 286.
- Volcanic disturbances in early times, **1**, 141.
- Volcanoes, sweeping outline of, **1**, 139; the clouds over, compared to Rousseau's writings, **2**, 263.
- Volition, obscure action of, **2**, 390.
- Voltaire, the Lucian of the 18th century, **2**, 97; Carlyle's account of, in his *Friedrich*, 102; Lessing's relations with, 187; the debt of free thought to, 263; his fame, **4**, 5; makes Difficulty a tenth Muse, 8; judged by power of execution, 42; *also*, **2**, 236; **4**, 161.
- compared with Dryden, **3**, 180; with Pope, **4**, 57.
- on the superfluous, **1**, 204; on Rousseau, 378; on his *Discours sur l'Inégalité*, **2**, 176; on Shakespeare, **3**, 63, 68; **4**, 17; on *Hamlet*, **3**, 86; on Corneille, 141; on rhyme in French poetry, 157; on Racine's *Bérénice*, 160; on Dryden's *All for Love*, 163 n; on his *Alexander's Feast*, 186 n; on Pope, **4**, 6; on French poetry of the 18th cent., 7; on Addison's *Cato*, 17; on English tragedy, 17; on the date of Dante's birth, 122; on political parties in Florence, 126; on Can Grande della Scala, 134; on Dante, 144, 164; on petty considerations, **5**, 196.
- Voss, Goethe learned to write hexameters from, **3**, 46; his *Luise*, 46.
- Voting, Prof. P.'s method, **1**, 94.
- Voyage, Percival's poetry compared to an aimless voyage, **2**, 141; the speculations of men likened to, 372.
- Voyage of life, our vessel often unsuited for its dangers, **1**, 32.
- Voyages, books of, **6**, 94.
- Vulcan, traditions of, transferred to the Devil, **2**, 348.

- Vulgar, its original meaning, **3**, 8
 Vulgar taste in literature, **3**, 356.
 Vulgarity, the Americans charged with, **3**, 236; an eighth deadly sin, 237.
 Vulgarity and simplicity distinguished, **4**, 276.
 Vulgarity of phrase in Dryden, **3**, 111.
- W. = Dr. Waterhouse.
 W. M. T. = W. M. Thackeray.
 W., Judge = Judge Warren.
 Wace, his treatment of final and medial *e*, **3**, 345.
 Wade, General, **1**, 264.
 Wages, protection has no effect on, **6**, 218.
 Wagons, white-topped, bringing country wares to Boston, **1**, 70.
 Walburger, his *De Lamtis* quoted at length, **2**, 349-352; on the bodily transportation of witches, 354, 355; discusses the propriety of lying to a witch, 379.
 Wales, Prince of, his motto, **3**, 14 n.
 Walker, James, Pres. of Harv. Univ., on President Quincy, **2**, 307; *also*, **6**, 159.
 Walker, W. S., on Shakespearian versification, **4**, 108 n.
 Walking, the Edelmunn Storg not fond of, **1**, 130; on a winter morning, **3**, 283; in a winter night, 288; in the morning air, 291.
 Wallachian legend of Bakala, **6**, 85.
 Walled town, its sense of completeness, **1**, 5.
 Waller, his servility to Charles, **3**, 116; verses to Cromwell and to Charles II., 116; Dryden on, 154; his inferiority, 156; his *Improvement of the Maid's Tragedy*, **4**, 14, 22; on care in writing, 14; on rhyme necessary in tragedy, 22; *also*, **3**, 9, 143 n.
 Walpole, Horace, foresaw the French Revolution, **2**, 263; his letters, **4**, 51; *also*, **3**, 179.
 Walrave, Gen., **2**, 115.
 Waltham, Mr. Lyman's place at, **2**, 295.
 Walton, **3**, 192; his style, 129.
 War, source of good fortune in, **2**, 114; general sympathy with failure in, **5**, 92; national pride of success in, 93; success the only argument for the soldier, 96; exacts the entire devotion of its servants, 101; the power of improvising a campaign, 107; the place of caution, 112; the quality of a great general, 115.
 Warburton, his defence of Pope, **4**, 38, 41.
 Ward, J. H., *Life and Letters of J. G. Percival*, **2**, 140-161.
 Warner, William, **3**, 53; **4**, 89; his *Albion's England*, 218.
 Warren, Judge, anecdote of, **1**, 87.
 Warton, Joseph, his classification of poets, **4**, 2; on Pope, 53; on Spenser's stanza, 329; *also*, **2**, 225 n.
 Warton, Thomas, Hazlitt's remarks on, **1**, 329; his *History of English Poetry*, 320; *also*, **2**, 225 n.
 Warwickshire, **1**, 48.
 Washington, George, in Cambridge, **1**, 56; Josiah Quincy's description of, **2**, 294; the lesson of his life applied to literature, **6**, 224.
 Washington corps. See Harvard Washington corps, **1**, 88.
 Washington's Life-Guard, its survivors, **1**, 83.
 Washington City, its lack of influence in the country, **2**, 277; importance of protecting it from capture by the rebels, **5**, 110.
 Wasting time, **3**, 256.
 Water, Uncle Zeb's opinions on, **1**, 25, 27; seen between snow-drifts, **3**, 279.
 Water-coolers, wet legs compared to, **1**, 181.
 Water-fall, at Tivoli, attempt at a description of, **1**, 128.
 Waterhouse, Dr. Benjamin, of Cambridge, reminiscences of, **1**, 94; his claim to having introduced vaccination, 96.
 Water-ice, sentiment compared to, **2**, 252.
 Watering-place, modern art compared to, **3**, 292.
 Water-power, genius of President Kirkland compared to, **1**, 83.
 Waterton's alligator, **1**, 138.
 Waterville, Maine, described, **1**, 5; its college, 6.
 Watts, Dr., **4**, 355; on the agreement of birds, **3**, 205.
 Wax figures, **4**, 74.
 Wayland the Smith, traditions of, transferred to the Devil, **2**, 348.
 Wealth, its value in the development of civilization, **6**, 26; its office in society, 36. See *also*, Riches.
 Weather, as a topic of conversation, **1**, 20; the Chief Mate's indifference to, 115; advantages to be obtained by the regulated observation of, **3**, 197; ill-temper laid to, **6**, 13; the old woman's remark on, to Southey, 85.
 Weather prophecies by animals, **3**, 198.
 Weathercocks, the pleasures of watching, **3**, 197.
 Webster, Daniel, compared with Fox, **2**, 275; seen in company with Pres. Tyler, **5**, 296.
 Webster, John, writer on witchcraft,

- story of a merman bishop, **1**, 110;
on witchcraft, **2**, 11.
- Webster, John, dramatist, his genius characterized, **1**, 277; compared with his contemporaries, 277; his imagination untamed, 280; lack of any large conception of nature, 280; examples of poetic phrases, 281; quaintness and terseness, 281; reminiscences of Shakespeare in his plays, 282; Ha litt's edition, 283; examples of blunders, 283; all the plays not by the same person, 287; his *Devil's Law-Case* his best play, 280; *also*, 279; **2**, 223.
- Wegele on Dante in Paris, **4**, 222 n.
- Weimar, **6**, 174.
- Weimar, Grand Duke of, **2**, 169.
- Wellington, **2**, 114; compared with Wordsworth, **4**, 375 n.
- Welsh pride of ancestry, **2**, 19.
- Werner, **3**, 66.
- Werwolves, origin of the belief in, **2**, 360; the evidence of the existence of, 362.
- Wesley, his reform of the church compared with Wordsworth's reform of poetry, **3**, 97.
- West Indies, Cromwell's plans with regard to, **2**, 33.
- Westminster Abbey, **6**, 69.
- Whales, **1**, 101, 102.
- Whigs, Wordsworth on, **4**, 367.
- Whipping. *See* Flogging.
- Whippoorwill, **3**, 215.
- Whist in winter, **3**, 273.
- White, Gilbert, his weakness for the thermometer and the weathercock, **3**, 196, 197; his *Natural History of Selborne* compared with Thoreau's journals, **1**, 381; its charm, **3**, 192; its absolute leisure, 193; its inadvertent humor, 194; the refreshment it brings, 195.
- White, Richard Grant, on the authorship of *Henry VI.*, 2d part, **3**, 54 n.
- White Hills, **3**, 201.
- White-washer Newman in Cambridge, **1**, 59.
- Whitfield controversy in New England, **6**, 151.
- Whittier on winter, **3**, 272.
- Wieland, **2**, 187, 219; his translation of Shakespeare, 222.
- Wierus, on witchcraft, **2**, 11; on the Faust legend, 354; refutes the story that Luther was the son of a demon, 363; his refutation of the facts on which witchcraft prosecutions were commonly based, 381; evidently means more than he says, 382.
- Wigs, Cibber on the fashion, **3**, 159.
- Wild, Jonathan, his father's opinion of travel, **1**, 120; impartiality of his ancestor, **3**, 227.
- Wild huntsman, **2**, 358.
- Wilderness, Châteaubriand's description of, **3**, 212.
- Wilhelmina, character of her affection for her brother Friedrich, **2**, 113.
- Wilkins, Bishop, **1**, 177.
- Will, confounded by Carlyle with wilfulness, **2**, 93; its place in life shown in *Hamlet*, **3**, 91.
- Willard's punch, **1**, 88.
- William and the Werwolf cited, **1**, 328.
- Williams, Roger, his character, **2**, 23; letter to Winthrop on Hugh Peters, 28; references in his letters to English affairs, 31; opinion of the Indians, 69; refuses to sell the Indians coats and breeches, 69; prophesies the decline of Puritan austerity, 72; *also*, 44.
- Willow-herb as a substitute for heather, **1**, 13.
- Willson, Forceythe, *The Old Sergeant*, **5**, 247 n.
- Wilson, Billy, **5**, 126.
- Winckelmann on Italy, **1**, 126.
- Wind, observation of, an innocent and healthful employment, **3**, 197; its tricks on the snow, 277.
- Wine, Aleatico, **1**, 174; effect on an Italian guide at Olevano, 175.
- Wine-shops in Genezzano, **1**, 170.
- Winship, Dr., his dumb-bells, **1**, 372.
- WINTER, A GOOD WORD FOR, **3**, 255-290; compared to old age or death, 258; compared with the other seasons, 258; its discomforts, 262; opinions of the poets, 264; its gloom in cloudy northern climates, 267; Cowper the first to recognize its amiability, 268; indoor pleasures in winter, 273; a walk in a snow-storm, 274; the preludings of winter, 275; the morning after a snow-storm, 276; the wind's action on the snow, 277; footprints of animals on it, 277; beauties of the quietly falling, damp snow, 278; the ice-coated trees, 279; snow forts and snow statuary, 281; the colors of snow-fields, 283; the winter morning walk, 283; the city in winter, 284; snow-crusts, 284; the Frost's exquisite handywork, 285; trees and smoke seen in winter, 286; the birds, 287; a walk at nightfall, 288; the moon, 289; the "whoop" of the freezing lake, 289; in New England, **1**, 105; *also*, **2**, 17.
- Winthrop, Fitz-John, letters describing the necessities of a "royal" Indian, **2**, 68.
- Winthrop, Gov. John, the elder, compared to Romulus, **2**, 14; his character, 23; steady courage of character, 29; *also*, 309; **6**, 146.

- Winthrop, John, Jr., Peter's advice to, **2**, 30; Edward Howes's correspondence with, on alchemy and mysticism, 46; Jonathan Brewster's correspondence with, on alchemy, 51; Sir Kenelm Digby sends him curious prescriptions, 56; Coddington's tiresome correspondence with, 63; owned a negro, 70; on two Indians in Harvard College, **6**, 147.
- Winthrop, R. C., on Josiah Quincy, **2**, 308.
- Winthrop, Samuel, **2**, 64.
- Winthrop, Stephen, **2**, 30; Roger Williams on, 28.
- Winthrop Papers, **2**, 21; absence of sentiment in, 72.
- Wisdom, her quiet booth unheeded, **1**, 81; Dante on the love of, **4**, 125; Dante on, 181, 183, 211.
- Wisdom and learning, Dante distinguishes between, **4**, 200.
- Wisdom of Solomon, Dante familiar with, **4**, 211 n; quoted, 211 n, 215 n, 217 n.
- Wise, Gov., **5**, 41.
- Wistar, Dr., **1**, 132.
- Wit, of Dryden and Pope compared, **3**, 114; Pope's line on, criticised, 125.
- WITCHCRAFT, **2**, 313-398; modern superstition compared with ancient, 317; imagination the great mythologizer, 318; origin of a belief in the supernatural, 320; survival of the heathen gods in Christian superstitions, 327; belief in the power of Satan, 327; the idea of a compact with him developed under Christianity, 329; the earliest legend of this kind, 329; instances of the contract, 332; influence of feudal allegiance upon its details, 334; various confessions of witches quoted, 334-346; the particulars of these confessions summed up, 346; vestiges of paganism in, 347, 352; Satan's kingdom the reverse of the Divine, 349; English act against witchcraft, 352; witches' gatherings and their journeys through the air considered, 352; connection with earlier legends, 357; degeneration of myth into legend and superstition, 359; werewolves and other instances of transformation into animals, 360; concubinage of witches with their familiars, 362, 374; stories of the Devil's appearing on various occasions, 366; grounds of the belief in witchcraft, 369; the natural attractiveness of demoniac possession, 370; the nervous element in it, 371; character of the philosophy and science of the day, 372; the knowledge of the present time not absolute truth, 372; causes of the cruelty displayed, 374; the belief in witchcraft flourishes in early New England, 10, 376; systematic hunting out of witches in England, 378; character of the evidence and of the trials, 378; the danger of scepticism and the first doubters, 381; beneficent effect of Wierus's work, 382; Reginald Scot's work, 384; the belief continues in spite of scepticism, 385; the Salem witchcraft, 388-395 (see particulars under Salem); cases of deception exposed, 391, 393, 394; the lesson to be drawn, 395; a higher mode of belief the best exorciser of superstition, 396; *also*, **2**, 11.
- special cases described, Theophilus (6th cent.), **2**, 329; Sylvester II., 331; Grandier at Loudun (1634), 332, 365, 371; Thomas Browne (1644), 332 n; Maréchal de Luxembourg (1695), 333; Abel de la Rue (1584), 334, 363; Eliz. Styles (1664), 338; Alice Duke, 340, 365; Anne Bishop, 340; Christian Green, 340; Janet Douglas (1677), 341; Julian Cox, 341; Mrs. Campbell, 342; Mrs. Barton, 342; witches of Mohra, Sweden (1670), 342; Agnes Simpson, 352, 378; Chris. Monig, 363; cases under Hopkins, 364; a girl in Italy, 366 n; nuns of Loudun (1634), 371; Jeanne Harvillier, 380; Guillaume de Lure (1453), 381; cases in Tourelle and Beauvais (1610-12), 386; cases in Bordeaux (1718) and Scotland (1722), 387; a girl near Amiens (1816), 387; the Salem cases (1692), 388-394; Anne Putnam, 391; girls in Littleton (1720), 391; a reading parson, 392; Martha Brossier (1598), 393; case in Brightling, Sussex (1659), 394.
- authors cited on the subject: Alciato, **2**, 383; Aubrey, 354; St. Austin, 360; Baxter, 377, 392; Bekker, 385; Bodin, 314, 335, 338, 347, 353, 360, 361, 375, 379, 380, 381, 383, 389, 393; Sir Thomas Browne, 387; Chaucer, 381; Defoe, 323; Sir K. Digby, 387; Garinet, 387; Glanvil, 314, 338, 354, 377; Grimm, 327, 348, 356, 358 n; Homer, 360; La Bruyère, 387; Lucian, 322, 357, 360; Lucretius, 322 n; Luther, 365, 367; Mather, 315; Maury, 316, 347, 387; Melancthon, 366; Montaigne, 387; Henry More, 338, 347, 364, 377; Perraud, 315; Peter of Abano, 381; Gasp. Pencernus, 362; Pliny the Younger, 323; Jacobus Savagius, 383; Schoolcraft, 362; Scot, 313, 383; Sinclair, 316; Trithemius, 366; Turell, 391; Tylor, 320; Upham, 313, 388; Walburger,

- 315, 352, 354, 355, 379; John Webster, 314; Wierus, 313, 349, 354 n, 381, 382.
- Witches, use of salves and powders, 2, 336, 338, 339, 350, 352; their journeys through the air, 336, 339, 341, 343, 350, 356; their gatherings, 337, 338, 340, 342, 345, 347, 349, 352; their contracts described, 338, 341, 344, 381; their familiars, 339, 340, 346, 348, 364; their prayers, 341, 342; their carrying off children, 343; their baptism, 344, 348, 352; their manner of milking, 345; their opening graves, 352; their night journeys, opinions of various authors on, 353, 357; use of broomsticks, and the like, 356; their powers according to popular belief, 369; the charge of sexual uncleanness with devils, 374; the wholesale destruction of, 374; tested by being thrown into the water, 379; Scot's charitable judgment of, 384.
- Witches' Sabbath compared to the excavations in the Roman Forum, 1, 210.
- Withdrawal from society, how far it should be carried, 1, 373.
- Wither, George, his works reprinted in the "Library of Old Authors," 1, 252; faults of the editor, 258; inaccuracy of the editor's quotations, 260; Farr on the character of his language, 261; in Pope's *Dunciad*, 4, 49; his influence seen in Milton's early poems, 75.
- Witte, Karl, on the date of the *Vita Nuova*, 4, 149; on Dante's *De Monarchia*, 150, 181 n; on the date of the *Div. Com.*, 157; on Dante's amours, 190 n.
- Wittenberg, 3, 72.
- Woden, 2, 358, 365; horse sacred to, 348.
- Woe, Rousseau's father's fondness for, 2, 248.
- Wolfenbüttel, Lessing librarian at, 2, 207.
- Wolfram von Eschenbach, 4, 159; his Parzival, 231.
- Wolsey, Cardinal, founder of Christ Church, 6, 168.
- Woman, her friendship a safeguard, her homage fatal, 2, 247; Dryden and Swift on her influence in refining language, 3, 131; in the Provencal poetry and in Dante, 303; Pope's low ideal of, 4, 46; Chapman's description of a virtuous wife, 47; Jeremy Taylor's description of an ideal, 47; Steele's compliment to his wife, 49; Spenser's lines to the Rosalind who had rejected him, 52; the *Divina Commedia* an apotheosis of woman, 159. *See also*, Italian women.
- Woman taken in adultery, Petrarch imagined at, 2, 255.
- Woman's last love, Webster's lines on, 1, 282.
- Wonder, the faculty of, not extinct, 2, 396.
- Wonders, told by the elder navigators, 1, 110; diminish with every recent traveller, 111.
- Wongen, night spent in one, 1, 36.
- Wood, Fernando, 5, 156.
- Woodmen, absence of extravagance of expression, 1, 32; fineness of character attained by, 38; hospitality of, 38; their satisfactions, 3, 281. *See also*, Loggers; Lumbermen.
- Woods in winter, Shakespeare on, 4, 315.
- Worcester's Geography, 1, 112.
- Words and phrases:—
again-bite, 3, 13.
again-rising, 3, 12.
ambassadors, 3, 131 n.
ancient, 1, 286.
arra, 1, 177.
astire, 1, 327.
ave, 1, 285.
battalions, 3, 131 n.
bays, 1, 308.
bead = offer, 1, 342.
bearth, 4, 93.
bid, 1, 297.
birch = canoe, 1, 24.
blasphemous, 4, 110.
bonny, 3, 344 n.
borrow = pledge, 1, 342.
bravo, 3, 239.
buxom, 3, 13.
can, in old English, 1, 330.
canny, 2, 114.
chaise debased into *shay*, 2, 274.
chaplain, 3, 344 n.
circumvallation, 3, 131 n.
citizen, as a title, 1, 135.
columbine, 3, 329 n.
comepleasants, or St. Elmo's fires, 1, 118.
commandement, 3, 344 n.
communication, 3, 131 n.
corps, 4, 91.
creatures, 2, 70.
death a sense, exclamation, 1, 274.
descant, 1, 285.
deuse, 2, 347.
dichtung, its comprehensive meaning, 6, 117.
driving the river, 1, 34.
elves, 4, 129.
'em for *them*, 3, 132 n.
evicke = chamois, 1, 298.
excellency, 1, 135.
fearful, New England pronunciation of, 2, 70.
feuter = lance-rest, 1, 327.
flunkies, 7, 177.
flute = *tau* glass, 1, 310.

- for to, 3, 130 n.
 fry = burn, 1, 312.
 fulminated, 3, 15.
 gallowsses, 1, 69.
 genteel, 4, 13.
 goblins, 4, 129.
 gramary = enchantment, 2, 331.
 grimoire, 2, 332.
 hair, 1, 312.
 head, etymology of, 3, 14 n.
 hearse, 4, 104 n.
 hele, 1, 332.
 help = servants, 2, 43 ; 6, 206.
 herôes, 4, 90.
 highth, 4, 92.
 horse, 4, 91 n.
 houmout = hochmuth, 3, 14 n.
 income, 1, 300.
 inhabitant, 1, 297.
 inwit, 3, 12.
 its, 4, 102.
 jumping-off place, 3, 145.
 kindly, 6, 118.
 knave, 3, 14 n.
 laid out, 2, 57.
 lede = people, 1, 341.
 lengthy, 3, 330.
 lordship, 1, 134.
 lucern, from *leucerve*, 1, 300.
 magnetism, 3, 185.
 make it nice = play the fool, 1, 344.
 mariner and sailor, 3, 13.
 mob, 3, 131 n.
 naumachia, 1, 136.
 navvie, 3, 14 n.
 neat, 1, 305.
 nice, connected with *Fr. niais*, 1, 344.
 noise, 4, 91.
 old Harry, 2, 347.
 old Nick, 2, 348.
 old Scratch, 2, 347.
 operations, 3, 131 n.
 osyll = blackbird, 1, 326.
 out of judgments, 1, 297.
 out-ray, from *oultreer*, 1, 299.
 pallisadoes, 3, 131 n.
 parle, 4, 104 n.
 pench, 1, 285.
 point-device, Hazlitt on, 1, 339.
 preliminaries, 3, 131 n.
 prime, 1, 337.
 proff = proof, 1, 344.
 pult, 4, 91.
 quarrels, 1, 309.
 quick, 3, 14 n.
 rave, 1, 310.
 recreant, 4, 104 n.
 reliable, 1, 351.
 scoff away, X.'s story of the Dutch captain, 1, 119.
 sentre, 1, 327.
 Serapeion, 1, 136.
 serenate, 4, 104 n.
 servant, use of the word in early New England, 2, 44.
 shay, 4, 91 n.
 sicker = sure, 1, 343.
 so few, 3, 130 n.
 so-so, 1, 311.
 speculations, 3, 131 n ; 4, 204.
 spirit, 4, 109.
 splits, 1, 37.
 sterve, 1, 301.
 strook, 4, 93 n.
 surëty, 3, 344 n.
 thing, defined, 1, 48.
 't is, 3, 132 n.
 treen broches = wooden spits, 1, 301.
 troop-meal, 1, 300.
 ure, from *en œuvre*, 1, 300.
 vote-killing mandrake, 1, 274.
 voutsafe, 4, 93.
 way-goose. Hazlitt's blunder in regard to, 1, 347.
 weltschmerz, 6, 118.
 wicked, 3, 14 n.
 wild, 1, 322.
 wilfully = wishfully, 1, 300.
 wis, 1, 285.
 without = unless, 1, 340.
 wrotherheyle, 1, 332.
 wynke = shut, 1, 343.
 words in *-sake* and *-side*, 4, 90.
 words in *sh*, in Milton, 4, 95.
 Wordsworth, Dorothy, influence on her brother, 4, 364 ; her brother's regard for her, 374 n ; her *Journal*, 367 n.
 Wordsworth, John, death at sea, 4, 387.
 WORDSWORTH, WILLIAM, 4, 354-415 ; the war of the critics over his claims as a poet, 354 ; the Wordsworthians a sect, 354 ; the elements of a sound judgment, 355 ; the limitations of his experience, 356, 413 ; considered himself a " dedicated spirit," 356 ; his birth and family, 357 ; childhood and early education, 358 ; effect of the simple life of Hawkshead on his character, 359, 365 ; his earliest poems, 360 ; 3, 96 ; his father's death, 4, 361 ; life at college, 361, 363 ; his reading, 361, 363 ; his character as a child, 362 ; relations with his sister, 364, 374 n ; his visit to France, 364 ; its effect on his development, 365 ; his politics, 365, 367, 373 ; his faith in man and his destiny, 366 ; a defender of the Church establishment, 367 ; his first consciousness of the variety of nature, 368 ; early influenced by Goldsmith, Cowper, and Burns, 369 ; his sense of melody dull, 369, 409 n ; a certain blunt realism, 370 ; his sensitive purity, 371 n ; his power in descriptive poetry, 372 ; his poverty, 374 ; his doubts on choosing a profession, 375 n ; life in Dorsetshire, 376 ;

- friendship with Coleridge, 376, 380, 408 n; removes to Allfoxden, 377; his confidence in himself, 379, 382, 385, 388, 403; his stay in Germany, 379; influenced but slightly by German literature, 380; life at Grasmere, 381, 386, 389; his theory of poetry as announced in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, 381; modified in later editions, 383; his choice of subjects, 384; his over-minute detail, 385, 400, 401; his commonplaces, 386, 400; friendship with Lamb, 386; marriage, 386; journey in Scotland, 386; friendship with Sir Geo. Beaumont, 387; grief at his brother's death, 387; pillaged and scoffed at by the reviewers, 388; his children, 390; appointed Distributor of Stamps, 391; later life and publications, 392; the honors of his old age, 393; his life compared to that of an oak, 394; personal characteristics, 394; a partisan in his theories of poetry, 395; his theories interfere with the appreciation of his later poetry, 396; instances of artificiality in the later poems, 396 n; his determination to produce an epic, 397; his quality as a critic of poetry, 398; the splendors to be found in the midst of prosiness, 400; his deficiencies, 401; his particular excellence, 401; fond of the sonnet, 402; his appropriate instrument the pastoral reed, 402; a certain dullness of perception, 403; incapable of sustained inspiration, 404, 408; the high quality of his best verses, 405, 407; lack of form and proportion, 406, 410; slight conception of other character than his own, 406, 413; the double personality in his poems, 408; his long-windedness, 409; defects of his narrative poetry, 410; his value to the world, 411; the grounds of his immortality, 414.
- WORDSWORTH: address 10 May, 1884, 6, 90-114; earlier essays upon, 100; the Wordsworth Society's edition of his works, 101; the light shed upon the development and character of his mind, 101; upon his political opinions, 102; his views of society and the means of its regeneration change, 103; his attitude toward religion, 103, and the church, 106; his poems retain their freshness, 107; the variety and rare quality of the minds that he appeals to, 108; yet he remains insular, 108; his greatness lies in single passages, not in sustained power, 109; his quality and method as a teacher, 110; treatment of nature in his poems, 111; his lack of discrimination, 111; his use of the sonnet, 112; local in choice of subject and tone of thought, 112; the permanent qualities in his work, 112; his abiding charm for innocent and quiet minds, 114; his calm treatment of criticism, 1, 232; his diction, 245; 3, 7; his impatience when any one spoke of mountains, 1, 371; 3, 257; his estimate of the value of public favor, 2, 78; his work compared to a heap of gold-bearing quartz, 78; Carlyle a continuator of his moral teaching, 119; his influence traced on J. G. Percival, 145; his genius, 148; his wholesome fellowship with Nature, 266; 3, 261; his lines on old age applied to Quincy, 2, 308; wanting in constructive imagination, 3, 35; his reform of poetry compared with Wesley's reform of the church, 97; the modification of his early opinions, 98; translation of Virgil, 98; Landor's remark to, on mingling prose with poetry, 144; view of religion, 187 n; his descriptions of nature, 271; his debt to Gray, 4, 4 n; ready to find merit in obscurity, 5 n; his relation to Pope, 27; his prefaces, 54 n; the beginnings of his poems, 102; Spenser's influence upon, 352; *also*, 1, 364, 377; 2, 105, 120, 155; 3, 262, 269, 287, 335, 337; 4, 276; 6, 163.
- compared with Keats in character and manner of working, 1, 231; with Keats and Byron, 242; with Shelley, 2, 145; with Milton as to style, 4, 86; with Wellington, 375 n; with Cowper, 399; with Goethe, 413; with Dryden, 6, 113.
- on winter, 3, 271; on midnight storms, 273; on the sounds of the freezing lake, 289; on Whigs and Chartists, 4, 367; on the infinite variety of nature, 368; on the owl, 372; on the province of a great poet, 379; on the destiny of his poems, 388 n; on biography of literary men, 392; on his own deficiencies as a critic, 399; on poetry as an art, 406; on books, 6, 80.
- on Burke, 3, 104; 4, 366; on Chatterton, 4 n; on Daniel, 280 n; on Spenser's *Faery Queen*, 351; on Sylvester's *Du Bartas*, 351; on Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, 380; on Scott, 399 n; on Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, 404 n; on a line of Shakespeare's, 409 n.
- Haydon on his lofty purpose, 1, 225; Sir Geo. Beaumont on his politics, 4, 367; Coleridge on, 373 n; Fox on, 381; Byron on, 388; Lamb on, 390; Southey on, 390 n; De Quincey on, 394; Leigh Hunt on his eyes,

- 394; Miss Martineau on his conversation, 400 n; Crabb Robinson on, 400 n; Landon on, 401; Ellis Yarnall on, 407.
- Blind Highland Boy* quoted, 4, 384; *The Borderers*, 376; rejected for the stage, 377; *Character of a Happy Warrior*, 3, 98 n; *Descriptive Sketches*, publ. in 1793, 4, 368; character, 370; changes in revision, 371; *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, the ocean swell compared to, 1, 101; *Eclipse of the Sun* quoted, 4, 396; *Epistle to Sir G. Beaumont*, 3, 98 n; *Evening Walk*, publ. in 1793, 4, 368; character, 370; changes in revision, 371; *Excursion*, 392, 400, 402, 406, 411, 414; quoted, 396 n; its heaviness, 398; *Helen of Kircornel* compared with the original ballad, 403 n; *Idiot Boy* quoted, 360 n; *Italian Itinerant* quoted, 396 n; *Laodamia*, 406; *Letter to a Friend of Burns*, 392; *Lines written at Tintern Abbey*, 3, 378 n, 380; *Lyrical Ballads*, the plan suggested, 376; published in 1793, 377; notices in the reviews, 378 n; its unpopularity, 378; the 2d vol. published, 381; the preface to the 2d ed., 381; reprinted in Philadelphia, 381 n; *Memoirs by Rev. Dr. Wordsworth*, 388 n; *Ode to Duty*, 6, 106; *Ode on Immortality*, 1, 128; 4, 4 n; *Peter Bell*, 392, 410, 411; *The Philanthropist* proposed, but not established, 374; *Prelude*, 171, 400; quoted, 356 n, 366, 399, 406 n; *Simon Lee* quoted, 385; *Thanksgiving Ode* quoted, 396 n; *The Thorn*, 380; *The Wagoner*, 410; *The White Doe*, 411.
- Wordsworth Society, the president's duty, 6, 100; the society's edition of the poet's works, 101; usefulness of the society, 106.
- Work, apotheosis of, in New England history, 2, 3.
- World compared to a medal stamped with Joy and Care, 1, 98.
- Worship, completeness of, in all its elements in the Roman Church, 1, 194.
- Wortley Montagu, Lady Mary. *See* Montagu.
- Wotton, Sir Henry, on Sidney, 3, 189 n.
- Wren, Sir Christopher, and Michael Angelo, 1, 199.
- Wright, Thomas, Hazlitt's censures of, 1, 328; editor of Chaucer, 3, 343.
- Wrong, antiquity gives it no claim, 5, 12.
- Wyatt, 3, 139 n; 4, 274.
- Wycherley, Pope's correspondence with, 4, 31.
- Yancey, W. L., his threats of secession, 5, 41, 42.
- Yankee. *See also*, American; New England.
- Yankee humor, displayed in the Cornwallis, 1, 77; usually checked by the presence of Public Opinion, 77.
- Yankees, popularity of Emerson, 1, 349.
- Yarnall, Ellis, on Wordsworth, 4, 407.
- Yeast, 4, 72.
- Ygdrasil, the tree, 1, 361.
- Yorkshire Tragedy, 2, 177.
- Young, Dr. Alexander, his series of old English prose-writers, 1, 247.
- Young, Edward, a grandiose image in his *Last Day* suggested by Dryden, 3, 126 n.
- Young ladies' letters, 2, 83.
- Youth, conductors for the natural electricity of, 1, 89; Francis Sales always young, 98; Mr. Emerson's perennial youth, 353; *also*, 3, 249; 6, 139.
- Zeb, Uncle. *See* Uncle Zeb.
- Zisca, 2, 7.
- Zodiac, Prof. P.'s succession of hats compared to, 1, 94.
- Zürich, its eight hundred authors in 18th cent., 2, 218.



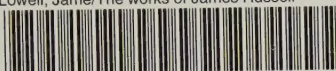
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